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Canada's Georges St. Pierre, top, the UFC's welterweight champion, takes on B.J. Penn Jan. 31 in Las Vegas. St. Pierre won by TKO.

MMA gets OK

Council votes 6-3 to give combat sport two-year test

JEFF HODSON
jeff.hodson@metronews.ca

The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is moving ahead with plans to hold a major "numbered" event in Vancouver this summer, a UFC official confirmed Thursday after city council gave approval for professional MMA.

Council voted 6-3 in favour of sanctioning mixed martial arts contests on a two-year pilot basis.

A card is to be held at GM Place and could generate up to $4.7 million in spinoff economic benefits.

"We have a lot of fans here and the sport is very popular here," said Lawrence Epstein, a Las Vegas-based UFC executive vice-president. "I think you could bet on seeing more than one event in two years in Vancouver."

UFC president Dana White, who was not at council, tweeted his excitement.

"Another one down!" White posted on Twitter. "Thanks to everyone in Vancouver who helped. See you in 2010."

Councillors Ellen Woodsworth, Andrea Reimer and Raymond Louie voted against the motion.

A former school trustee, Reimer said she couldn't vote for a sport that marketed itself with violence and desensitized children to fighting.

"We're not trying to hide," Epstein said afterwards. "This is a combat sport. It's not badminton or tennis."

Other concerns included indemnifying the city against lawsuits and the fact that MMA is a legal grey area.

Prizefights (with the exception of boxing) are banned under the Criminal Code of Canada. This is the reason that MMA is banned in Ontario.

Conservative MP James Moore, who urged council to embrace MMA "with both hands," said the federal government has no problem with MMA. The Tories introduced Bill C-31 in May (which is still in first reading) to change the code's dated language around the sport.

As well, a letter to the city from B.C.'s Attorney General Mike de Jong gave tacit support for the sport.

In it, de Jong said he would not "criticize" the approach Montreal has taken in hosting its two (and soon to be three) UFC fights.

As part of the motion, Mayor Gregor Robertson will write to the federal and provincial governments to clarify the legality of MMA.

ShareYourViews
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TransLink's fare gates ready by '13

TRANSIT TransLink is introducing smart payment cards and adding turnstiles to SkyTrain stations and SeaBus terminals that should be operational by 2013.

The transit authority is starting to look for a service provider and work to install the turnstiles is expected to get underway in 2010.

The smart card will be the size of a credit card with an embedded microchip. Once the cards are "loaded," users will be able to simply touch electronic readers to pay their fare at stations or buses.

The turnstiles, or fare gates, will not only add a sense of security to the system but also help TransLink crack down on fare evaders, the company said.

METRO VANCOUVER

News on the Move

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Movies pg 31

Downey gets in Holmes groove

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Local

Lenin on display as part of Biennale

A second sculpture under the 2009 Vancouver Biennale has been erected in Richmond. The sculpture, Miss Mao Trying to Poise Herself at the Top of Lenin's Head, is at the intersection of Elmbridge and Alderbridge Way.

METRO VANCOUVER

TransLink service free New Year's Eve

CORRECTION TransLink is providing free service on New Year's Eve — not Christmas Eve as reported Thursday.

Free rides start at 5 p.m. and are just one of several transit service modifications over the holidays.

Most buses and train lines will run on holiday schedules on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. The West Coast Express won't run on Dec. 28 or Jan. 1. METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

INJURED A 17-year-old girl wanted by police hit her head on the pavement when she fell to the ground after running into a parked car on Granville at Fir streets. She was taken to hospital. The Penticton-born teen was still in handcuffs when she attempted her escape.

DEATH A 55-year-old woman died in a Port Coquitlam apartment fire early Thursday morning. The fire broke out just before 3 a.m. in a suite at the back of a townhouse complex near Lougheed Highway. The woman's identity has not been released.

EMISSIONS B.C. and California have signed an agreement to limit greenhouse-gas emissions for new automobiles. Mirroring B.C.'s emissions standards to California's will reduce emissions by 30 per cent in 2016.

CRIME A 27-year-old Chilliwack man has been charged with possession of stolen property for allegedly stealing 18 brass plates — worth as much as $14,000 — from gravestones. Shaun Darryl Bolko, 27, was granted a conditional release.

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WHAT'S ONLINE TODAY

Blogs It's Called Football welcomes author Declan Hill to discuss the fight against match fixing

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8 things that drive you crazy

JEFF HODSON
jeff.hodson@metronews.ca

While classic (read: Jack Nicholson detailing a windshield with a two iron) road-rage incidents are rare in Vancouver, there are still plenty of driving behaviours that set knickers in knots and get people pointing wildly with the wrong finger.

Const. Lindsey Houghton, a spokesman for Vancouver police, said drivers in Metro Vancouver are generally respectful, and, given the (usually) temperate climate, more aware of the cyclists and pedestrians with whom they share the road.

Having said that, here's a list compiled by the VPD (in no particular order) of a few things that drive motorists to distraction:

1. People running amber or red lights.
2. Speeding in school or playground zones.
3. Aggressive drivers.
4. Getting cut off.
5. Weaving in and out of traffic.
6. Failing to signal lane changes.
7. Dangerous left turns at intersections.
8. Cyclists without helmets weaving in and out of traffic.

Houghton said it comes down to changing driving habits, saving lives and reducing injuries (which should also reduce insurance costs).

"There are bad driving habits everywhere," he said.

"If we can get people to slow down a little bit, get people to put a little more distance between them and the car in front of them, especially during snowy, icy weather, (that would be ideal)."

What drives you mad behind the wheel?

"I guess what drives me mad is when people drive too fast in kids' zones. I have two kids, and I see people disregarding the speed limits all the time in Vancouver." Liz Boja, 35

"I would say the thing that drives me crazy is people who do not signal or just use abrupt signals, not caring about the people behind them nor in front, and that's how accidents happen." Nicole Guevara, 38

"People who jaywalk, because you can hit them and they don't look at the cars. That's their fault for not looking." Patricia Yulo, 19

"People who do not know what a left lane is for. Like when old people get in the left lane and they drive under the speed limit, and you tell them to move but they don't, even though you honk them. You have to flip them the finger to make them understand." Karl Dovick, 24

STIG NIELSEN/FOR METRO VANCOUVER

KRISTEN THOMPSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Elyse Dodge, left, and Evan Cunningham, students of Langara College's Design Formulation Program, in front of their award-winning window display at Peking Lounge in Chinatown Thursday.

Students make over Chinatown windows

DISPLAYS Chinatown shoppers may find themselves doing double takes this holiday season as some store windows got a free facelift thanks to Langara College design students.

The Seasonal Window Display Contest saw six businesses in the 100 block of East Pender Street get their window displays redesigned by the students.

The winning display, at the window of the Peking Lounge furniture shop, was announced Thursday afternoon. It was picked by members of the Chinatown Business Improvement Association Society (VCBIA).

"The process was so much fun," said Elyse Dodge, a member of the winning team. "We went from concepts right through execution. It all came together so well."

Dodge accepted the award along with fellow team member Evan Cunningham.

Frances Wong, vice-president of the VCBIA, was impressed with the skill level of the students and the improvements made to the neighbourhood.

"The participation was awesome," he said. "It's a new look for Chinatown."

The VCBIA and Langara College said they plan to collaborate on an Olympic-themed design project for Chinatown shop windows in January, ahead of the Chinese New Year.

SEAN KOLENKO/
FOR METRO VANCOUVER

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Dad, son charged after assault at Canucks game

CRIME A Burnaby father and son were arrested after a 24-year-old female security guard was assaulted at the Canucks game Wednesday night.

Gareth William Franklin, 53, and William Neil Franklin, 22, are both charged with one count of assault causing bodily harm.

Two men, after being escorted from their seats for disruptive behaviour, were being walked out of the building by the female guard when the younger man became aggressive and unco-operative with her.

Just as the younger man was being let out of the building, the other man allegedly put the guard in a choke hold and forced her to the ground. She suffered no serious injuries.

Const. Anne Longley of the Vancouver Police Department said on Thursday the men were expected to appear in court that day.

"Charge approval went through this morning, so it's likely they will see a judge sooner than later," she said.

A spokesperson from GM Place said in an email that they will be co-operating fully with authorities, but would not comment further until the investigation is complete.

SEAN KOLENKO/
FOR METRO VANCOUVER

Coquitlam home dangles on cliff after hillside collapse

PROPERTY A Coquitlam home is dangling on the edge of a cliff after the entire backyard was swept away when the hillside collapsed.

The incident happened Wednesday evening.

It is being linked to a water main that burst several hours earlier.

No one was hurt when muck and trees slid down the steep slope, surging onto the road below, which forms the boundary with the neighbouring municipality of Port Moody.

Coquitlam Mayor Richard Stewart called it a "calamitous event" for the homeowner, but said it could have been much worse.

Only the affected home has been evacuated and engineers spent the night assessing and trying to stabilize it. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Protesters force torch run to take a detour in Toronto

The 2010 Olympic flame was met by around 100 protesters as torchbearers jogged down Yonge Street in Toronto on Thursday. The route was diverted and a second flame was lit so it would arrive on time at the Hospital for Sick Children, before ending with a massive party at Nathan Phillips Square. METRO VANCOUVER

Santa to go for a winter bike ride

HEALTH A slimmed-down Santa will be at the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition's winter biking station in Strathcona on Tuesday.

The leaner version of the Jolly Old Elf will be talking to commuters at Main and Union streets about the health benefits of cycling.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Booze ban led to firing: Fire chief

STIG NIELSEN
for Metro Vancouver

Squamish's former fire chief says it's unfair of that town's mayor to say he did not have a good working relationship with firefighters because any attrition was caused by his attempt to ban booze from firehalls.

Ray Saurette claimed he was fired on Tuesday without cause after volunteer firefighters and some retirees allegedly banded together against him over on-the-job alcohol consumption.

"Knowing that those individuals could be going across the doorway, getting out a piece of fire apparatus, and going out there not being at the top of their game is concerning to me," he said.

But Squamish Mayor Greg Gardner told media Saurette, who was chief for nine years, was dismissed because of his working relationship with those under him.

Gardner did acknowledge that alcohol is consumed at the town's firehalls.

Saurette said he is devastated about his termination, but he is happy about the attention the issue is receiving.

"It's shedding light on a problem that has existed in the department for some time," said Saurette.

Squamish

- The Squamish fire department has five paid staff and 60 volunteers.
- It responds to about 480 incidents per year.

The Bachelor's choice could be local woman

TV If she plays her cards right, Vancouver medical technician Tiana may soon be on the wings of love — and on the arm of commercial pilot Jake Pavelka — as the newest winner of The Bachelor.

Roots

- Jillian Harris and Tiana both grew up in Alberta.

Season 14 of the reality TV show begins on Jan. 4, and two of the 25 women vying for Pavelka's heart hail from the Great White North.

Tiana, 31, will also be competing against Jessie, 25, a cosmetic sales manager from Oakville, Ont. Both women are following in the footsteps of Season 13 contestant Jillian Harris — another Vancouverite.

Vancouver medical technician Tiana is set to appear on the new season of The Bachelor.

Harris came in third place in The Bachelor and went on to star in Season 5 of The Bachelorette, in which she rejected Pavelka — a contestant in that season — for winner Ed Swiderski.

METRO VANCOUVER

B.C. Hydro to have free celebration site for Games

DOWNTOWN B.C. Hydro will host a free downtown public celebration site during the 2010 Games, the Crown corporation announced Thursday.

The Power Smart Village, at B.C. Hydro's head office in downtown Vancouver, will feature a sustainable dance floor that generates electricity as people dance. There will also be an outdoor theatre and a "home of the future" to showcase the newest innovations.

Two six-metre Salish carvings will welcome visitors to the village, which is located on Dunsmuir Street between Homer and Hamilton streets. It is located near the Vancouver's Downtown LiveCity site and the Four Host First Nations pavilion.

It will operate through the Paralympics.

METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

TIGER The Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver and SUCCESS are holding a stamp unveiling ceremony next month to celebrate the Year of the Tiger.

ECONOMY The B.C. Progress Board ranked the province's economy ninth out of 10 in its annual benchmark report, which ranks the provinces across six categories. B.C. was first in health outcomes and environmental quality, third in personal income and fourth in jobs. The board ranked B.C. eighth in social conditions.

CHARITY Despite the Surrey Christmas Bureau being overwhelmed with high demand, all the needy families turning to the charity this holiday season will be helped out because of an unprecedented number of donations, news1130.com reports.

AVALANCHE The Canadian Avalanche Centre has issued a weekend-long warning for the back country of B.C.'s South Coast.

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Canucks giving away the shirts off their backs Sunday

The Vancouver Canucks are holding their annual Jerseys Off Our Backs night at GM Place on Sunday when they play host to the St. Louis Blues. The players will give away 24 jerseys to fans at the end of the game. METRO VANCOUVER

Games sponsors, merch sales rolling in

VANCOUVER 2010 Games

Olympic organizers are seeing a surge of interest in the 2010 Games from both corporations and Canadians.

Two new sponsor deals in recent weeks and the runaway success of merchandise sales mean more money is flowing in than organizers had foreseen.

The organizing committee's deputy chief executive officer says in part that's thanks to the torch relay, which is waking up the country to the Olympics themselves.

General merchandise sales are also on fire, meaning overall there will be more money for the Canadian Olympic Committee, but also for Games organizers who scored a marketing coup when they put their logo on the Team Canada hockey jerseys to earn royalties.

But Dave Cobb says despite the new influx of cash, it doesn't mean the organizing committee is out of the woods financially just yet.

He says organizers still expect to use up all of their contingency as expenses continue to fluctuate in the final two months until the Games.

Overall, they have a budget of $1.75 billion.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

B.C. seniors need more protection: Watchdog

SERVICES B.C. Ombudsperson Kim Carter says the government needs to do more when it comes to protecting seniors in residential care.

Carter makes 10 recommendations in an initial report examining seniors' care in B.C. Her report, Getting it Right for Seniors in British Columbia, says the government has to do more for the most vulnerable seniors — those in residential care.

She says the government accepts four of her 10 recommendations, but indicates it only intends to examine the issues in the other six. Her report says the Liberals fall short on the recommendation to create a provincial website with in-depth information about individual care facilities. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Man charged twice for driving under heroin influence

CHARGES A 34-year-old West Vancouver man has been arrested twice in five days for driving while under the influence of heroin.

Early Wednesday morning, the man was pulled over by West Vancouver Police after allegedly failing to respond to a change in traffic lights. After some initial questioning, the man was identified as the same person whom police had arrested on Dec. 12. Police seized one gram of heroin from a vehicle.

The man was scheduled to appear in court Thursday morning. Police are recommending separate charges of driving while impaired. SEAN KOLENKO/ FOR METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

DEATH Investigators still haven't determined how a 59-year-old man wound up dead in his submerged pickup truck near Port Alice on Vancouver Island. Brett Horrocks was reported missing on Sunday, and his body was discovered three days later. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Saskatchewan opts against nuclear power

Saskatchewan has stopped short of giving a green light to a nuclear power plant, but it isn't putting up a permanent red light either. Energy Minister Bill Boyd says a proposal from Ontario-based Bruce Power for a large-scale plant in Saskatchewan will not move forward. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada

Ex-CEO wants Nortel to pay for lawsuit

A former Nortel CEO who took millions with him when he left the company in 2001 wants Nortel to cover up to $1 billion of his costs if he loses a series of class action lawsuits filed by former employees. John Roth, left, filed a U.S. creditor claim in a U.S. bankruptcy court on Dec. 1. U.S. Nortel employees and former employees filed the lawsuits about four years ago against Nortel and those at the company who were responsible for managing the company-sponsored investment plan. THE CANADIAN PRESS

'Mankind is inherently good,' Lindhout says

ORDEAL Despite more than a year of abuse at the hands of Somali captors, a Canadian freelance journalist says she still believes people are fundamentally good.

Amanda Lindhout released a statement yesterday thanking her family and others for securing her freedom after 15 months being held hostage in the lawless African nation. An accompanying photograph showed her smiling broadly next to a white Christmas tree.

"My faith in human decency was sorely tested at times during my captivity; however, after my release, I am humbly reminded that mankind is inherently good by the tremendous efforts and support of fellow Canadians," she wrote.

Lindhout was kidnapped along with Australian photographer Nigel Brennan along a crumbling road in southern Somalia on Aug. 23, 2008.

They were released Nov. 25, several months after both their families hired a private hostage negotiation firm to secure their release.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

THE CANADIAN PRESS/HANDOUT

Amanda Lindhout is shown in a photo released by her family.

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Scan this barcode to read Amanda Lindhout's complete statement, or read it metronews.ca/canada.

Harper arrives at Copenhagen summit

U.S. offers $1-trillion plan hinging on transparency

Stephen Harper kept a low profile on his first day at the Copenhagen climate summit amid high hopes for a breakthrough over a $1-trillion American plan.

While the prime minister hobnobbed with other leaders at a royal dinner hosted by the queen of Denmark, it fell to Environment Minister Jim Prentice to deliver Canada's address to the UN climate talks Thursday.

Prentice's speech came after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton offered to help raise $100 billion a year for the next decade to help the most vulnerable nations cope with a warming planet.

That includes an unspecified American contribution which would include mix of public and private money. But there's a couple of catches: Countries must agree to a climate deal in Copenhagen, and all must agree to "transparency" in reporting and verifying cuts to greenhouse gases.

The latter condition was clearly directed at China, which has balked at what it sees as an intrusion on its sovereignty.

Clinton said lack of transparency is a "deal breaker" and insisted: "There shall be a transparency requirement."

"It would be hard to imagine, speaking for the United States, that there could be the level of financial commitment that I have just announced in the absence of transparency from the second-biggest emitter — and now I guess the first-biggest emitter — and now nearly, if not already, the second-biggest economy."

China's vice-foreign minister, He Yafei, called the offer a "good first step." He said China is ready for "dialogue and co-operation" on its emissions actions "that is not intrusive, that does not infringe on China's sovereignty."

Harper arrived in Copenhagen facing heavy criticism from developing countries and environmentalists who accuse Canada of failing to make concessions to help reach a deal.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper arrives in Copenhagen, Denmark for the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference on Thursday.

Teens get 2 years for murder plot

WINNIPEG Two teens who plotted to corral students in a Winnipeg school auditorium and randomly open fire "until they got tired" have each been sentenced to two years in jail.

The 17-year-old male and his 18-year-old girlfriend, who cannot be identified under court order, had pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit murder.

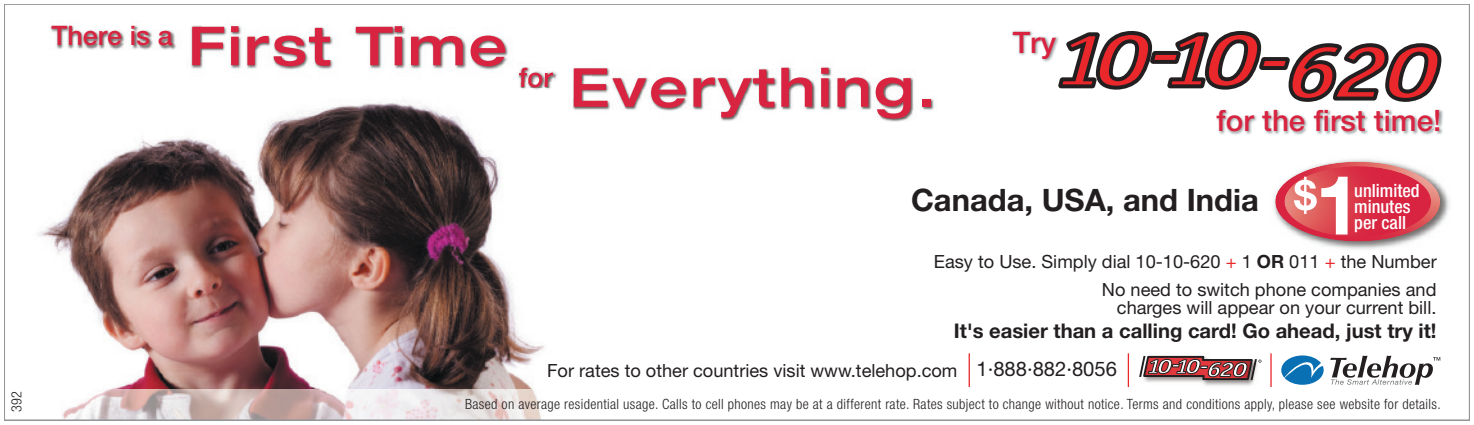
They both apologized at a sentencing hearing in October. The young man admitted he "really screwed up," while the girl said she wanted to "apologize to the community and all that I have affected with this act of mine."

At the hearing, Crown and defence lawyers recommended the teens be sentenced to two years in jail, followed by three years on supervised probation. Judge Brian Corrin wasn't convinced, reserved his decision and asked the Crown to consider the matter further.

In the end, he accepted the joint recommendation.

The teens agreed to be sentenced as adults although lawyers asked that they serve their jail terms in a youth facility.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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Judge rules against ban on gang colours

A judge has ruled a law banning the wearing of gang colours in Saskatchewan bars violates a person's right to freedom of expression. The case involved Jesse Bitz, 36, a member of the Hells Angels. Bitz was charged under Saskatchewan's Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act in 2007. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pot use worse than thought, study says

Daily cannabis can have a long-term impact

The effects of daily cannabis use on teenage brains is worse than originally thought and the long-term effects appear to be irreversible, new research from McGill University suggests.

The study, by Dr. Gabriella Gobbi, a psychiatric researcher from the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre, suggests that daily cannabis consumption can lead to depression and anxiety.

The new study, published in Neurobiology of Disease, suggests that the reputed "soft" drug has an impact on serotonin and norepinephrine, compounds that help control mood and anxiety.

Her research team observed that 18 rats exposed to cannabis had decreased levels of serotonin, which affects mood; and higher levels of norepinephrine, which makes one more susceptible long-term to stress.

"These permanent changes in the brain are also linked to certain mental illnesses, like schizophrenia," Gobbi said in an interview Thursday. "And we showed that even if we stopped the cannabis use at the end of adolescence, the changes were still detectable in adulthood."

While past epidemiological studies have shown how cannabis consumption can affect behaviour in some teenagers, Gobbi said the new study demonstrates that the effects are more devastating in teens compared to adults.

"Our study is one of the first to focus on the neurobiological mechanisms at the root of this influence of cannabis on depression and anxiety in adolescents," she said. Gobbi said the study reveals that because serotonin and norepinephrine systems are still in development during adolescence, cannabis interferes with their development.

"We don't know if some subjects would be more at-risk than others, including adults," said the McGill professor.

Gobbi said she will be observing a group of young human marijuana smokers to continue her research.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto **Robin Hood at Christmas time**

VINCE TALOTTA/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

A rehearsal shot of some of the stars in action during this year's Christmas pantomine, Robin Hood: The Environmental Family Musical, put on by Ross Petty in Toronto.

Stelmach says oilsands help Canada's economy

Go Green

FUNDS Ganging up on Alberta's polluting oilsands is becoming a national sport and it's on full display for the world in Copenhagen.

But what would the country look like if the cash flow pumped from the Western oil patch was suddenly turned off?

With climate change now morphing into a national-unity issue, angry defenders of Western oil argue that the provinces doing most of the environmental finger-pointing — namely, Ontario and Quebec — can only afford their own social programs and tax rates thanks to the gooey Alberta cash cow they love to disparage.

Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach says his province's oil-rich economy provides the rest of the country with about $21 billion — which, by way of comparison, is more than all of Canada's $18-billion defence budget, and about half of what Ontario spends on health care.

It is also a key driving force behind the federal equalization program, which transfers more than $8 billion a year to Quebec.

That $8-billion equalization cheque is equivalent to five years' funding for Quebec's cherished $7-a-day daycare program, and is almost twice the sum Quebec has slapped on the table to buy New Brunswick's power utility.

Many contend that curbing Alberta's oil production would siphon much-needed cash from the bank accounts of the so-called "have-not" provinces.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Equalization

- Six provinces are set to receive about $14.2 billion in equalization payments this year. For 2009, the formula will funnel about $8.4 billion to Quebec, $2.1 billion to Manitoba, $1.7 billion to New Brunswick, $1.6 billion to Nova Scotia, $347 million to Ontario and $340 million to Prince Edward Island.

Europe, Canada sign deal to open up aviation industry

TRAVEL The European Union on Thursday signed an aviation deal with Canada that will allow airlines to operate flights from any European city to Canada and will phase out restrictions on foreign ownership of carriers.

The deal replaces a patchwork of agreements between Canada and most — but not all — of the EU's 27 countries that prevented one EU country's flagship airline from running flights from another part of Europe to Canada.

This meant, for example, that British Airlines could only run flights from Britain to Canada. That's no longer the case now and airlines can operate direct flights to Canada from any part of Europe. The deal also removes all restrictions on routes, prices or the number of weekly flights between the two regions.

The EU's executive commission said the deal could generate economic benefits of more than $100 million and create more than 1,000 jobs. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Man allegedly attacked officer

HALIFAX A Lower Sackville, N.S., man faces several charges after a Halifax regional police officer ended up in a brawl with a prisoner he was transporting.

James David Brown, 30, will appear in court once he is released from hospital.

Police say the officer was allegedly hit with a flashlight after stopping to check on the prisoner in the back of his car. A struggle ensued as both men tumbled out onto the road where two people stopped to help the officer gain control.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Magna aims to be a heavyweight in ultra-light auto parts

Magna and the federal government are announcing in Woodbridge, Ont., the creation of a centre to develop ultra-light materials for new vehicles. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Gay MP's card angers 'bigots'

HOMOPHOBIA "A handful of bigots" are objecting to gay Liberal MP Scott Brison's Christmas greeting card.

The card depicts the Nova Scotia Liberal MP and spouse Maxime St. Pierre.

"The overwhelming response has been very positive," Brison said from Windsor, N.S. "There's always a very, very tiny minority of bigots."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ottawa messing up pensions math: Study

The federal government is not showing the true cost of pensions it gives employees, a think tank says.

And it should come clean before it starts reforming the retirement-income system, the C.D. Howe Institute says.

It says the federal debt would have climbed an additional $58 billion over the past 10 years if Ottawa had valuated the pensions it offers public servants.

In the last year alone, if Ottawa had done its math correctly, pension obligations would have more than doubled the size of the $6-billion federal deficit.

"I wouldn't go as far as saying they're cooking the books," said Alexandre Laurin, senior policy analyst at the think tank.

"But the cost is greater than what the government is actually saying."

Pension powwow

- Finance ministers from all provinces and Ottawa are meeting in Whitehorse to negotiate how best to put retirement income for all Canadians on a steady footing.

But the union representing many public-service employees says Ottawa is right to take the long view when valuating its pension assets and liabilities.

Using current market prices would cause too much volatility in valuing the pension plans, said Toby Sanger, economist for the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

He said the focus on ministers' talks in Whitehorse should be how to improve private-sector pensions and private savings plans so they aren't as vulnerable as the financial crisis of the past two years has shown them to be.

"We need a better pension system that pools the risk for everybody," he said.

The federal public service offers pension benefits that are the envy of most people in the private sector, prompting calls to close the gap.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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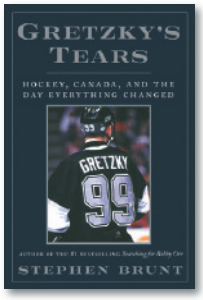

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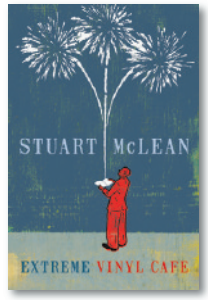

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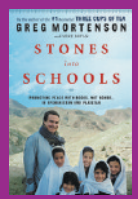

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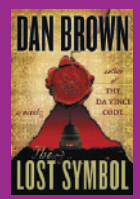

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Artist Bio - Adrian Glynn

With all the acts out there right now consisting of a guy and a guitar, it's easy to get lost in the crowd. That's where this guy comes in. Adrian Glynn is a singer songwriter from Vancouver whose music blurs the lines between folk, blues, roots, and bluegrass. Adrian not only plays guitar, he is also known to feature an array of other instruments and sounds in his music including a lap-slide steel guitar, a Balalaika, and he recently acquired an Oud on a nine-month long trip to India, Jordan and Israel. Adrian's powerful storytelling ability is showcased in his lyrics, which reside among haunting melodies you can't help but be drawn in to.

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Authorities say dead woman's family collected benefits

The daughter of an 87-year-old woman whose corpse was kept in her house for seven months after she died appeared in court in North Carolina Thursday. A sheriff's deputy said that the woman's family had continued to collect her government pension checks after she died. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World

Berlusconi released from hospital

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was discharged from a Milan hospital on Thursday, four days after he was attacked by a mentally ill man at a political rally. The 73-year-old leader suffered a fractured nose and broken teeth in the attack. TV footage, left, of him leaving San Raffaele Hospital showed the conservative leader and media mogul with a white bandage around his nose and face as he waved weakly with one hand. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Irish bishop resigns

IRELAND A Roman Catholic bishop in Ireland has resigned after an investigation into child sex abuse by clergymen accused him of ignoring reports of crimes by priests in his diocese, the Vatican said Thursday.

The one-line announcement that Bishop Donal Murray had resigned did not mention the scandal, but a statement Murray read to colleagues in the Irish city of Limerick left no doubt that he was going because of an Irish government investigation's findings about his time as an auxiliary bishop in Dublin.

"I know full well that my resignation cannot undo the pain that survivors of abuse have suffered in the past and continue to suffer each day," Murray said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Inexcusable'

- The bishop, Donal Murray, had been widely expected to resign following last month's report from an Irish government-appointed commission. It ruled that Murray had handled reports of child-abusing priests "particularly badly" — and condemned his failure to crack down on one particular abuser, the Rev. Thomas Naughton, as "inexcusable."

News in brief

NEW HAMPSHIRE A woman who allegedly faked her own pregnancy has been charged with killing her pregnant friend, cutting her baby girl from her womb and kidnapping the infant. Julie Corey was initially charged with kidnapping after authorities found her and the baby in a homeless shelter in Plymouth in July. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Getting closer in Copenhagen?

U.S., China make progress as clock ticks away for global climate deal

Go Green

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Scan this barcode for a daily video report from Copenhagen, or watch it at metronews.ca/world

Large pieces of a climate deal fell into place Thursday with new offers from the U.S. and China, but other tough issues remained before American President Barack Obama and other leaders can sign off on a political accord to contain the threat of an overheated world.

An announcement by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton that the United States would contribute to a climate change fund amounting to $100 billion US a year by 2020 was quickly followed by an offer from China to open its books on carbon emissions to international review.

The U.S. delegation did not immediately react to the offer by Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei.

But it went a long way toward the U.S. demand that China report on its actions to limit the growth of Beijing's carbon emissions and allow experts to go over its data.

The sudden concessions on the eve of Friday's final session lifted hopes that the 193-nation conference could reach a framework agreement that could be refined into a legal accord next year on limiting greenhouse gas emissions and fighting climate change.

Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao were to join more than 110 world leaders for the last scheduled day of the conference, which for most of its two weeks was embroiled in angry exchanges, a partial boycott by African countries and another entire day wasted in procedural wrangling.

It's also possible that once the world leaders depart, the talks could continue at the ministerial level and stretch late into the night and early Saturday.

A pair of Greenpeace activists crashed a Thursday banquet hosted by Denmark's Queen Margrethe.

THORKILD AMDI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Activists from Greenpeace gatecrash a State Dinner hosted by the Queen of Denmark Thursday. The activists were arrested.

The couple, dressed in formal wear, unfurled two banners reading "Politicians Talk, Leaders Act" as they walked on the red carpet reception line, and were dragged from the hall by security guards. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Global warming responsible for current drought: Delegates

AFRICA Millions of people in drought-stricken East Africa face hunger and poverty after seasonal rains failed again, withering crops, killing livestock and drying up ponds and streams, an aid group said Thursday,

Oxfam said some areas had received less than five per cent of normal rainfall for November.

In war-ravaged Somalia, it is the sixth failed rainy season and the worst drought for 20 years. The failed state is already being torn apart by a brutal civil war that means nearly half its population relies on aid.

Go Green

Diplomats said the suffering underscores the need for an agreement to combat climate change.

African delegates at the Copenhagen talks on climate change have repeatedly accused rich industrialized countries of polluting the atmosphere with greenhouse gases and then leaving underdeveloped countries to deal with the resulting drought and starvation on their own.

"We face a disastrous situation in the Horn of Africa," said Karel De Gucht, the EU's development commissioner. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Still few clues to June plane crash

FRANCE New airline safety standards may be required after the crash of Air France Flight 447 cast doubt on the reliability of speed-measuring equipment in difficult, stormy conditions, French aviation investigators said Thursday.

The Airbus A330 plunged into the Atlantic Ocean off Brazil in June. All 228 people aboard were killed. French accident investigation agency BEA said experts still have little idea about why the plane went down. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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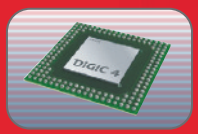

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Fugitive doctor living in tent stabs self as police close in

An Indiana doctor on the run for five years on charges of fraud and malpractice was arrested on a snowy mountain in northern Italy, and stabbed himself in the neck as he was taken into custody, police said. Mark Weinberger, 46, had been living in a tent, police in the town of Aosta said Thursday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

FLORIDA James Bain made his first-ever cellphone call Thursday, dialling his mother to tell her he had been freed because of DNA evidence after 35 years in jail for a crime he did not commit. Mobile devices didn't exist in 1974, when he was sentenced to life for kidnapping a nine-year-old boy and raping him.

BRAZIL The stepfather of a two-year-old boy found with 42 needles in his body confessed to jabbing them into the toddler during weeks of rituals with a woman, police said Thursday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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U.S. study shows a body language bias

Through a set of ingeniously concocted experiments reported in Friday's journal Science, researchers show that white characters in TV series display far more negative body language toward their black peers than to members of their own race.

The bias conveyed by these body clues is not only recognized subconsciously by people who watch the shows, but significantly influences their feelings about the black characters.

"Sadly, we observed that non-verbal race bias is a typical pattern on scripted television shows," lead study author Max Weisbuch said in a release on the paper.

In the first experiment, researchers used clips from 11 different television programs — including Bones, Grey's Anatomy, CSI and Scrubs — and digitally removed one of the characters participating in the scenes. They then muted any onscreen conversations and recruited college students who had never seen the episodes to watch.

"We took out the target character, who was either black or white, and the (remaining) character was always white," senior study author Nalini Ambady said.

"Then we just showed people and said, 'How much does this person like the person they're interacting with?'" said Ambady, a Tufts University social psychologist.

The student viewers, it was found, consistently judged the body language expressed by the visible white characters as more negative whenever the unseen character in the scene was black.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Philippines **Waiting out volcano**

DAN AMARANTO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Evacuees cook their meals as lava cascades down the slopes of the Mayon volcano Thursday. Philippine security forces will forcibly evacuate thousands of residents reluctant to leave their farms near the smoldering volcano, officials said.

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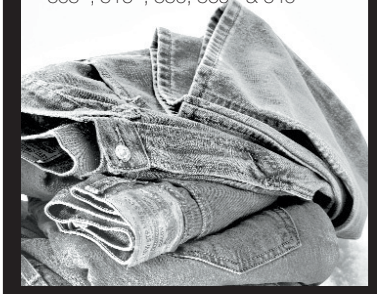

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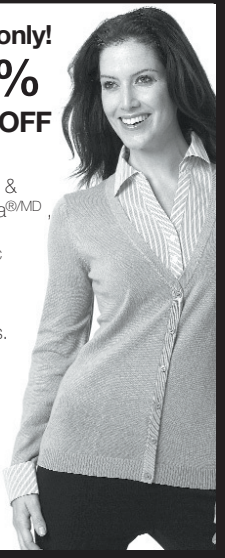

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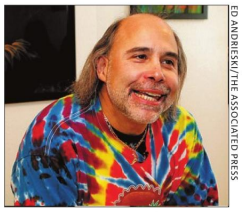
Foreign adoptions plunge in U.S.
The number of foreign children adopted by American citizens dropped by 27 per cent in the 2009 fiscal year, reaching the lowest level since 1996 and prompting advocates to urge Congress to help reverse the trend. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS


ED ANDRIESKI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Owner Steve Horowitz

Mean munchies on menu at Ganja Gourmet

Any slacker living over his parents' garage can make pot brownies, but gourmet chefs are taking the art of cooking with marijuana to a higher level.

In Denver, a new medical marijuana shop called Ganja Gourmet serves cannabis-infused specialties such as pizza, hummus and lasagna.

The evolution of pot cooking has followed an explosion of medical marijuana in recent years. Many health-conscious patients would rather eat the drug than smoke it, and they're looking for more options than brownies.

Ganja Gourmet's menu includes lasagna ("LaGanja"), "Panama Red Pizza" and an olive tapenade called "ganjanade," along with sweets such as cheesecake and muffins.

Employees wear tie-dyed T-shirts that proclaim, "Our food is so great, you need a license to eat it!!!" All patrons must show a medical marijuana card.

Diners are allowed one item every 45 minutes, though 90 per cent of the business is takeout. A whole pizza sells for $89. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Brazil court delays custody case

Brazil's Supreme Court delayed the return of a nine-year-old boy to his U.S. father Thursday, only hours after the man arrived from New Jersey in hopes of taking the boy home for Christmas. The court ruled the child must stay in Brazil while it considers a request that his own testimony be heard in the case. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mexican troops kill drug kingpin

Mexican troops acting on information from U.S. officials took out drug kingpin Arturo Beltran Leyva in an assault that provided a rare victory for President Felipe Calderon, but left a power vacuum that could lead to more violence.

Mexican marines evacuated an upscale apartment complex in Cuernavaca Wednesday before some 200 troops stormed the building and demanded the surrender of Beltran Leyva, one of the world's most brutal drug lords.

Gunmen fired on the marines, who then launched an attack that lasted nearly two hours.

Nicknamed the "boss of bosses," Beltran Leyva is the biggest drug lord to be taken down in Calderon's drug war, which is ending its bloodiest year yet.

His absence is expected to shake up Mexico's narcotics trafficking networks.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Battle against cartels

- The raid was a rare success for Mexican and U.S. intelligence officials, who have been co-ordinating closer than ever in the battle against the cartels. More than 15,000 people have been killed in Mexican drug violence this year.

COLIN PERKEL/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mohammad (Froggy) Rahman

Interpreter seeks help from Canada

PANJWAII Froggy cannot forget the horrific blast.

It was in early June 2008 as hundreds of Canadian and Afghan soldiers swept through villages in the dangerous Panjwaii district of Kandahar province.

A former medic in the Afghan National Army and Canadian Forces translator, Mohammad Rahman, 42, picked up his nickname because of his raspy, throaty voice. As a medic, Froggy was used to treating horrific wounds. Nothing prepared him for this IED blast.

"I see my major — he lost one leg above the knee-joint completely — no boots, no legs," he said, tears welling.

Still, Froggy sprang into action. He applied what was likely life-saving tourniquets to the badly injured Maj. Mark Campbell. A medevac chopper landed in a nearby field, and Campbell was stretchered aboard.

As he finishes his story, Froggy talks about the one thing that scares him: The prospect of the Canadian forces leaving him behind.

Froggy's family has received latters from the Taliban, warning him he should quit his interpreter work or face death at their hands. Froggy is pleading with the Canadian government to grant him and his wife, four daughters and three sons entry to Canada. THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

PAKISTAN Two U.S. missile strikes pummelled targets inside the main sanctuary used by al-Qaida and the Taliban along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, killing 17 people, local intelligence officials said. The latest drone attacks Thursday came amid the prospect of renewed political instability in Pakistan, with President Asif Ali Zardari facing calls for his resignation after the Supreme Court struck down an amnesty that had protected him and thousands of other political officials from corruption charges. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Comment

Games spirit restored

UrbanCompass

Thank goodness for Lululemon. The Vancouver retailer, founded by irreverent guy Chip Wilson, has come up with an antidote to the no-fun attitude of the Vancouver Olympic Committee. And it's about time!

They are the Olympic "Games," but to date there has been no spirit of play from VANOC, which has been grimly pushing the citizens of this city around in the name of protecting the brand, even coming down like a ton of bricks on a hapless Greek restaurant that's been doing business on Denman for decades.

So when Lululemon launched its "Cool Sporting Event that Takes Place in British Columbia Between 2009 and 2011 Edition" Monday, neatly blocking any legal avenue VANOC could use to retaliate, the oppressed masses of Vancouver took to dancing in the streets.

"Lululemon's cheeky response to VANOC's neurotic obsession is brilliant because it works on so many levels."

Lululemon's cheeky response to VANOC's neurotic obsession is brilliant because it works on so many levels. In a single stroke of guerrilla marketing, Lululemon has captured the headlines during the most important retail season of the year and has bolstered its own brand — irreverent, smart, out there, human.

Unlike poor old Hudson Bay Co., which has so far gathered mostly grief for its own line of Olympic gear, even managing to offend First Nations with its ersatz Cowichan sweater. Best of all, Chip and his gang took a free poke in Darth VANOC's eye while the rest of us cowered beneath the yoke of its world-class oppression.

Of course, Darth has responded true to form, with all the humour of a hemorrhoid, grumbling about how it is disappointed and expected better sportsmanship from Lululemon.

Look: We all realize VANOC has an enormous responsibility to bring the Games in on budget and protect its contractual obligations. But you can also argue that it has undermined the Olympic spirit by ruthlessly stomping on the faintest hint of disobedience.

So it's not surprising that the oppressed masses, fed up with Olympic restrictions of every description, have risen as one to applaud the cheeky monkeys at Lululemon.

If VANOC was smart, it would just shrug and smile and give Chip Wilson its Hero of the Soviet Award, or whatever its highest honour is called. He has restored the spirit of the Olympic Games just as it was about to be crushed under a pile of rules, restrictions and fake Cowichan sweaters.

But that would be too much like fun. And fun is the one thing VANOC's money and lawyers can't seem to buy.

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting; vancouverletters@metronews.ca.

MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

Girls and women: No limits on dreams

Belinda Stronach

Over the past generation our society has made considerable progress in reducing barriers to women's success. Yet, despite our progress, troubling inequalities persist and affect the lives of millions of girls and young women around the world.

In developing countries, one person in eight is a girl or a young woman age 10 to 24. As the fastest growing segment of the population, their welfare is a fundamental input for key economic and social outcomes. Giving these girls an education, legal protection, health care, and access to training and job skills will significantly contribute to what is known as the girl effect on development. A girl who finishes high school has access to a job that pays more than subsistence wages and the chance to start a small business. Educated women invest 90 per cent of their incomes into their families, compared to roughly 30 per cent by their male counterparts.

"Canada must take the lead and call to put girls and women at the centre of the development narrative."

The gap between what we know and what we do, between our ability to end poverty and our efforts to do so lie at the heart of the problem. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) challenge the world's leading economies to meet targets framed in results-oriented terms. MDG 3, for example, calls to promote gender equality and empower women. The target was to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015. Four years after the 2005 target date, gender parity in education has yet to be achieved.

As Canada prepares to host the G8 and G20 summits in June 2010, we must use this historic opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the advancement of girls and women worldwide. Canada must take the lead and call to put girls and women at the centre of the development narrative. Doing so will yield huge returns in the health of families, peace building, and global economic development.

On this critical issue Canada will be standing together with governments such as Spain and the Netherlands, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, global foundations and the private sector in responding to the mounting evidence that investing in girls will break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and, conversely, failure to do so could cost the world's poorest countries billions in economic growth.

For more information on how the NGO community is coming together on this issue, please visit www.girlsandwomen.com.

Belinda Stronach is chair of the Belinda Stronach Foundation.

Worth mentioning

NASA, Google offer ways to track greenhouse gases

The question is a potential deal-killer: If nations ever agree to slash greenhouse gas emissions, how will the world know if they live up to their pledges?

The answer is in space, experts say — both outer space and cyberspace.

Go Green

NASA, the wonder agency of the 1960s, and Google, the go-to company of the early 21st century, are trying to give the world the ability to monitor both the carbon dioxide pollution and the levels of forest destruction that contribute to global warming.

"Just having the thing flying around there imaging would just about make everybody act differently," said Prof. Steve Pacala, director of the Princeton Environmental Institute. "The idea that you could pull a fast one would be different."

The monitoring problem "is a big one because we don't know what we're counting," said Melinda Kimball, senior vice-president of the UN Foundation.

Google, meanwhile, has rolled out a new program call Earth Engine, which essentially is a massive storehouse for satellite and other data that forest countries will be able to access for free by the time of the next UN climate conference in Mexico next year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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British Airways to fly over holidays

British Airways has won an emergency court injunction to stop a 12-day strike by its cabin crew, bringing relief to around one million travellers whose Christmas holiday plans were threatened by the planned walkout. The High Court backed BA's claim that the ballot of around 13,000 workers by the Unite labour union was illegal. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Business

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EDITOR: FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Inflation jumps again

Second straight month of rising prices reverses slide

Canadians are again starting to pay more for most things they consume as the inflation rate jumped to one per cent in November, the second straight month prices have risen sharply.

While higher gasoline prices were mostly to blame, Statistics Canada said the advance was broad-based. Prices rose in seven of eight major components tracked by the agency, and in all 10 provinces.

As well, the month-to-month index was higher with prices rising 0.5 per cent from October.

The last two months have seen a complete reversal in the inflation story in Canada, which previously was one of falling prices and negative inflation.

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But a rapid decline in gas prices from record highs in July 2008 has reversed the trend, the agency said.

"Prices at the pump are now exerting upward pressure on the Consumer Price Index after an extended period in which they were the main contributors to year-over-year declines in overall consumer prices," the agency explained.

In November, gas prices were 14.1 per cent higher than at the same time last year and 13.1 per cent lower in October from the previous year.

Other components pushing prices higher were food, transportation, household operations, and furniture and equipment.

In addition, consumers paid 7.8 per cent more for car insurance and 3.2 per cent more for health and personal care. Meanwhile, the cost of passenger vehicles fell six per cent, and shelter costs declined 1.7 per cent as natural gas prices were almost 30 per cent lower this year than last.

Overall, the trend of inflation is unlikely to worry the Bank of Canada as most price increases remain tame. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shoppers opening their wallets, survey reveals

CONSUMERS Recession. What recession?

A new survey finds that despite the economic downturn, Canadian shoppers are opening their wallets a lot wider this year than last.

Moneris Solutions Corp., a debit and credit card payments processor, says its figures show sales are up leading into the last weekend before Christmas.

The Moneris survey tracks national sales in the final five weeks of the pre-holiday season. It says in the first weekend of December, shoppers spent five per cent more overall, with department stores the clear winner as sales shot up 12.8 per cent. Last weekend it was the turn of apparel retailers as they rang in an 11.4 per cent increase in sales amid an overall six per cent increase in retail business compared with last year. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shaolin monks **Foray into market**

AXINHUA/JWANG SONG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this image released by China's Xinhua News Agency Thursday, students of a kung fu school perform shaolin kung fu (martial arts) at the Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng. The famed fighting monks of Shaolin temple plan a foray into modern finance. The local government entity that manages the 1,500-year-old Buddhist temple's tourism-related assets, plans to join with China Travel Service in a venture that will seek to raise up to 1 billion yuan ($146.4 million US) in a share listing on either a mainland market or in Hong Kong, reports said Thursday.

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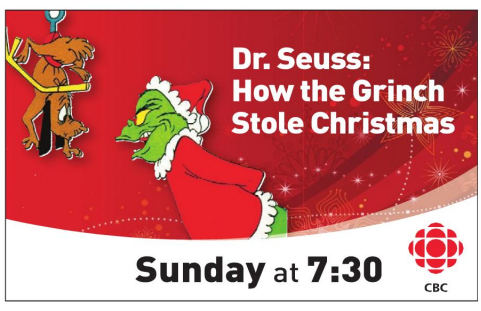
Business in brief

GROWTH Economists at some of Canada's largest banks say the Canadian and world economies will continue to rebound out of recession next year. The economists predict global growth will rise by as much as four per cent overall in 2010. But they say the global recovery will be led by growth in emerging economies, with industrialized countries lagging behind.

BERNANKE A U.S. Senate panel has approved the nomination of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke to run the nation's central bank for another four years. The Senate Banking Committee voted 16-7 to send Bernanke's nomination to the full Senate for consideration.

BCE Telecom giant BCE Inc. is raising its dividend, buying back up to $500 million worth of shares and making a big pension plan contribution, just one day after its newest wireless competitor launched its cellphone services. METRO NEWS SERVICES



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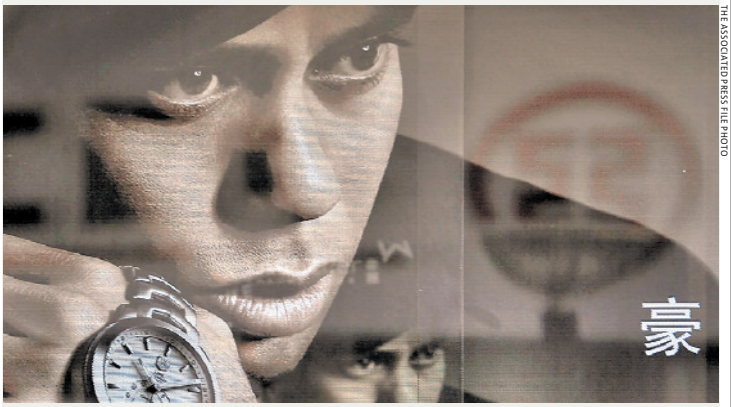
Cedar Fair to be sold
Cedar Fair LP, which runs Canada's Wonderland, will be sold to Apollo Global Management for $635 million US. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Tiger **Still an image of perfection?**



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

This poster of Tiger Woods in a Swiss watch shop in Beijing may come down soon. Advertisers are rethinking their association with him as public scrutiny of his personal life continues.

Feds plan to sell nuclear reactors

The federal government is formally inviting offers as it seeks to privatize the nuclear reactor division of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.

In announcing the request for "investor proposals," Natural Resources Minister Lisa Raitt said the goal is to boost AECL's global presence while reducing the financial risk carried by taxpayers.

The research and technology division of the Crown corporation, including the Chalk River laboratories and its troubled medical isotope production, are not part of the government sale.

A National Bank study commissioned by the Conservative government determined there is "significant private sector interest" in a stand-alone CANDU reactor business.

However the government may have undercut its own bargaining position when Prime Minister Stephen Harper's chief spokesman described AECL as a "dysfunctional" $30-billion "sink-hole" last June.

That same month, the Ontario government put off a decision on new reactor construction after deciding all the bids — including one for an untried, next-generation AECL reactor — were too costly.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

U.S jobless claims dropping slowly

ECONOMY A report on unemployment claims and a forecast of U.S. economic activity pointed yesterday to an American economy mending slowly, without the job growth needed to fuel a vigorous recovery.

The number of newly laid-off workers filing claims for unemployment benefits unexpectedly rose last week, but the four-week average for jobless claims fell.

That was an encouraging sign that the labor market is gradually improving. The four-week average is now at its lowest point since late September 2008, when the financial crisis hit with full force.

Separately, a forecast of economic activity rose for the eighth straight month in November, a private research group said, signaling the economic rebound will continue into next year.

The Conference Board said its index of leading economic indicators rose 0.9 percent last month, up from 0.3 percent in October. The latest reading beat the 0.7 percent rise that economists surveyed by Thomson Reuters had expected. Improvements in financial conditions, housing permits and the labor market boosted the index last month, said the Conference Board.

The Labor Department's report on unemployment claims said the number of new claims rose to 480,000 last week, up 7,000 from the previous week. That was a worse performance than the decline to 465,000 that economists had expected. The four-week average dipped to 467,500, the 15th straight decline. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RIM reports BlackBerry e-mail delay

DELAY Research in Motion says some of its BlackBerry smartphone customers in North America are experiencing delays receiving e-mail.

RIM says it has technicians working on the problem.

The Waterloo, Ont.-based company says BlackBerry phone, Internet browsing and texting are not affected by the problem.

The last time RIM's BlackBerry service had a major outage was in February 2008, when an upgrade to the wireless system appeared to have been behind a three-hour service disruption affecting millions of users in North America.

RIM is scheduled to release its fourth-quarter earnings later in the day.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Bookmaker takings bets on Woods' divorce settlement

If Tiger Woods and his Swedish wife get divorced, Elin Nordegren won't be the only one collecting on the settlement. British bookmaker William Hill is taking bets on just how much Nordegren will get if she decides to divorce Woods. Bettors can get 25-1 odds that Nordegren will receive more than half a billion dollars. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sports

Bombers coach arrested, fired

The Winnipeg Blue Bombers have fired head coach Mike Kelly after one turbulent season. Bombers board chairman Ken Hildahl made the announcement Thursday night, the same day Kelly was arrested in Pennsylvania in an alleged domestic dispute. Police in Bridgeport, Pa., said they arrested Kelly after responding to a domestic disturbance at his home Thursday morning. THE CANADIAN PRESS

EDITOR: DON.MCHOULL@METRONEWS.CA

Bengals' Henry dies from injuries suffered in dispute

NFL Chris Henry was no stranger to trouble.

Indeed, his multiple arrests during a five-year NFL career were among the factors prompting the league to toughen its personal conduct policy.

But to hear his teammates tell it — even the team's owner — the Cincinnati Bengals receiver was determined to leave behind his troubled past and move ahead toward a bright future.

Chris Henry

Tragically, his efforts were cut short when he died from injuries in what police said was a domestic dispute with his fiancée.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police said the 26-year-old Henry died early Thursday, less than 18 hours after he fell off of the back of a pickup truck on a curvy residential street about eight miles northwest of downtown Charlotte.

The cause of death was not immediately released.

Henry was away from the Bengals after suffering a season-ending broken forearm in a game last month.

"We knew him in a different way than his public persona," Bengals owner Mike Brown said. "He had worked through the troubles in his life and had finally seemingly reached the point where everything was going to blossom. And he was going to have the future we all wanted for him. It's painful to us. We feel it in our hearts, and we will miss him."

Bengals receiver Andre Caldwell said: "People thought he was a bad guy, but he had a big heart."

Police released few details about the investigation, other than homicide detectives were assigned to the case.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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SCOREBOARD

NHL

THURSDAY'S RESULTS
Calgary 2 Los Angeles 1
Minnesota 3 Montreal 1
Nashville 6 Edmonton 3
Atlanta 6 Dallas 5 (OT)
Detroit 3 Tampa Bay 0
N.Y. Rangers 5 N.Y. Islanders 2
Phoenix 2 Columbus 1 (SO)
Pittsburgh 3 Philadelphia 2 (SO)
San Jose 4 Anaheim 1

FRIDAY GAMES
Ottawa at New Jersey
Toronto at Buffalo
Carolina at Florida
Tampa Bay at St. Louis
Boston at Chicago
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THURSDAY'S RESULTS
Chicago 98 New York 89
Miami 104 Orlando 86
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FRIDAY GAMES
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NFL

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San Francisco at Philadelphia
Oakland at Denver
Cincinnati at San Diego
Tampa Bay at Seattle
Green Bay at Pittsburgh
Minnesota at Carolina

For late game scores, please visit metronews.ca/sports

Sedin enjoying career year

NHL PREVIEW

Capitals vs. Canucks

AT

When the Washington Capitals visit the Vancouver Canucks Friday, the game will feature a star forward who's second in league scoring and a viable Hart trophy candidate.

But it isn't Alexander Ovechkin.

Despite playing without his twin brother and linemate for much of the season, Vancouver's Henrik Sedin is on pace for his first 100-point campaign and sits ahead of names such as Sidney Crosby, Dany Heatley, and even Ovechkin on the NHL's scoring list.

DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Henrik Sedin is on pace for his first 100-point campaign.

But ask Sedin about his Ovechkin-like start to the season, and you're likely to get an answer that doesn't carry quite the level of flash typically associated with the Russian sniper.

"I don't know, I never really put any (emphasis on) point production," Sedin said Thursday.

"I think I've played good, I think I've been consistent this year."

Sedin leads the Canucks with 15 goals and 28 assists for 43 points in 34 games this season. He appears poised to smash his career-highs of 22 goals and 82 points, both set last year.

Sedin is the only Vancouver player to have hit the 30-point plateau and is in the midst of an eight-game point streak.

He's also tallied three game-winning goals for a team battling to climb into the Western Conference's top eight.

"He's carried the load offensively, no doubt," said Vancouver captain Roberto Luongo.

"He's produced a lot. And even when his brother wasn't here with his injury he produced and showed he's a very capable player and one of the best in the league."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada's hidden treasures of sport

Every time the Lou Marsh Award pops up all Canadian sports fans get an eye opener. There's a ton of talent out there.

The mystery is why most of the candidates that make it to the final ballot for consideration as Canada's athlete of the year are anonymous to most people in this country.

This year, Sidney Crosby, the brilliant captain of the Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins, captured the prize named after the late Toronto Star sports editor — an award that dates back to 1936 and whose recipients have included Wayne Gretzky, Barbara Ann Scott, Catriona Le May Doan and Mike Weir.

For Crosby it's a second victory and well-deserved considering he's the best Canadian hockey player alive and led his team to arguably the most difficult championship to capture in North American professional sport.

Just about everybody knows Sid the Kid's name.

The same is true of Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns, a perennial finalist because he's the best playmaker in big-time basketball.

But that's where the familiarity gets fuzzy.

It's a revelation to discover that Canada also boasts sluggers like Jason Bay and Justin Morneau, each capable of more than 100 RBIs in Major League Baseball. Or that Daniel Nestor, the best doubles player in tennis, hails from north of the border.

If you dig deeper you understand that world champions like Christine Nesbitt of speedskating, John Kucera of alpine skiing, Jasey Jay Anderson of snowboarding and Alexandre Bilodeau of freestyle skiing also bleed red and white.

This is to say nothing of swimmer Ryan Cochrane, who won two medals at the world aquatics championships, or Priscilla Lopes-Schliep, a hurdler who captured silver at the world track and field summit.

They are Canadians close to the pinnacle of the most contested sports on the face of the Earth.

The names already mentioned barely scratch the surface.

There are golfers, mixed martial artists, figure skaters and football players who also deserve consideration.

There are so many jewels of Canadian sport we have yet to fully appreciate. Maybe we should make the Lou Marsh Award more than a one-day deliberation that seems so fleeting.

Perhaps we should make it more inclusive and spark a national celebration so that all Canadians might uncover our hidden treasures of sport.

Scott Russell is the Host of CBC Sports Weekend seen Saturday afternoons. He has covered professional and amateur sports including nine Olympic games and numerous world championships.

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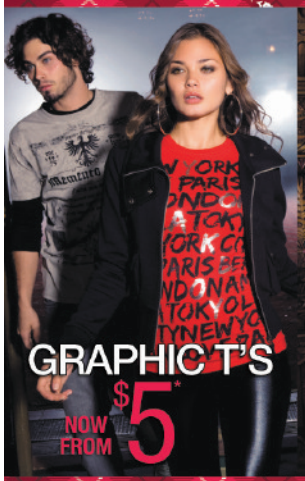

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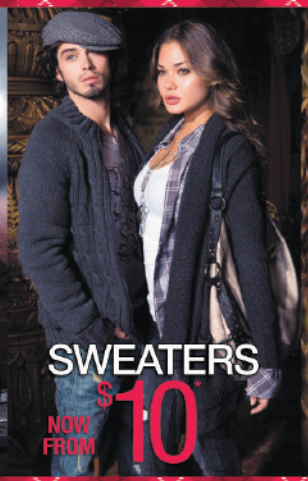

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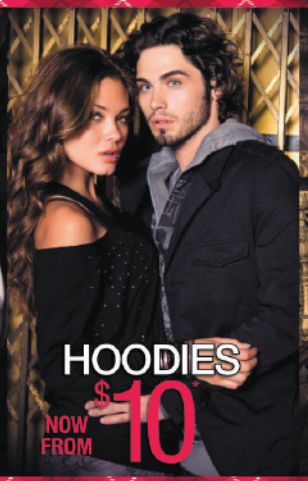

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Men's tennis tournament returns to Atlanta

The men's tennis tour is returning to Atlanta, putting a hard-court tournament in the city that will be played July 17-25, 2010, and start off the U.S. Open Series. The ATP tour bought the sanctioning rights to the Indianapolis tournament that has been held in July but recently had attendance and sponsorship issues. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Burnaby's Sinclair top female soccer player

Forward Christine Sinclair was named Canada's top female soccer player for the fifth year in a row Thursday.

The Burnaby, B.C., native had four goals in seven games, leading the Canadian national team in goals scored for the ninth time in 10 seasons.

Christine Sinclair

"It never gets old," said Sinclair, regarding her five consecutive awards. "For me, it's all about the team. I'm a forward on a very good team that gets to score a lot of goals ... If you're a goal scorer you get the recognition but I owe it to my teammates."

This year Sinclair played in the inaugural season of the Women's Professional Soccer for FC Gold Pride, who are based in the Bay Area near San Francisco. She led the team with six goals — tied for fifth in the league — and was selected to the year-end WPS all-star Team.

At the all-star game in August, Sinclair scored both second-half goals in a 4-2 victory over Swedish soccer club Umea IK.

"It was a dream come true to play the sport I love professionally," said Sinclair of her WPS season.

"It's what I always wanted to do, and I didn't want to go overseas to do that. And to get to play against, and with, the best players in the world was such a unique experience and I think I developed so much as a player."

Sinclair is Canada's all-time leader with 99 goals in 132 career appearances.

Her 2009 co-winner — a selection from the men's national team — will be announced on Friday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Sports in brief

LIONS The BC Lions announced Thursday that offensive lineman Dean Valli had agreed to terms on a new contract. Originally joining the club as a first-round selection in the 2006 draft, Valli became a starter at left guard last year after three seasons as a back-up.

WOODS Michael Phelps expressed sympathy for Tiger Woods and his family Thursday because of the scrutiny resulting from the golfer's admitted infidelity. "He's going through a hard time right now I assume — I've no idea what he is going through — but it can't be easy, I just wish him the best for himself and his family," said Phelps, who is in Manchester, England, for the "Duel in the Pool" swim meet. "I'd be the first to admit I've made a lot of mistakes both in and out of the pool."

WORLD CUP Brazil will spend $280 million US to renovate Maracana Stadium, closing the historic venue next year to spruce up the centrepiece of the 2014 World Cup. Opened for the 1950 World Cup, Maracana is expected to be reopened in December 2012, government officials said Thursday.

ALOUETTES The Montreal Alouettes have rewarded head coach Marc Trestman for leading the team to the Grey Cup championship. The Alouettes have reached an agreement with Trestman that will keep him with Montreal through the 2012 season.

SKI TEAM The Canadian ski team took another blow Thursday when veteran Kelly VanderBeek suffered a suspected torn ACL in her left knee during World Cup downhill training. VanderBeek, 26, is the third Canadian skier this week and the fourth in less than a month to be injured. She finished fourth in the super-giant slalom at the 2006 Turin Olympics and was considered a medal threat at the 2010 Games.

SNOWBOARDING Jasey-Jay Anderson and Michael Lambert swept the top two spots at a World Cup men's parallel giant slalom snowboarding competition Thursday. Anderson, of Mont-Tremblant, Que., edged out Lambert in the final for his 25th career World Cup victory across all disciplines.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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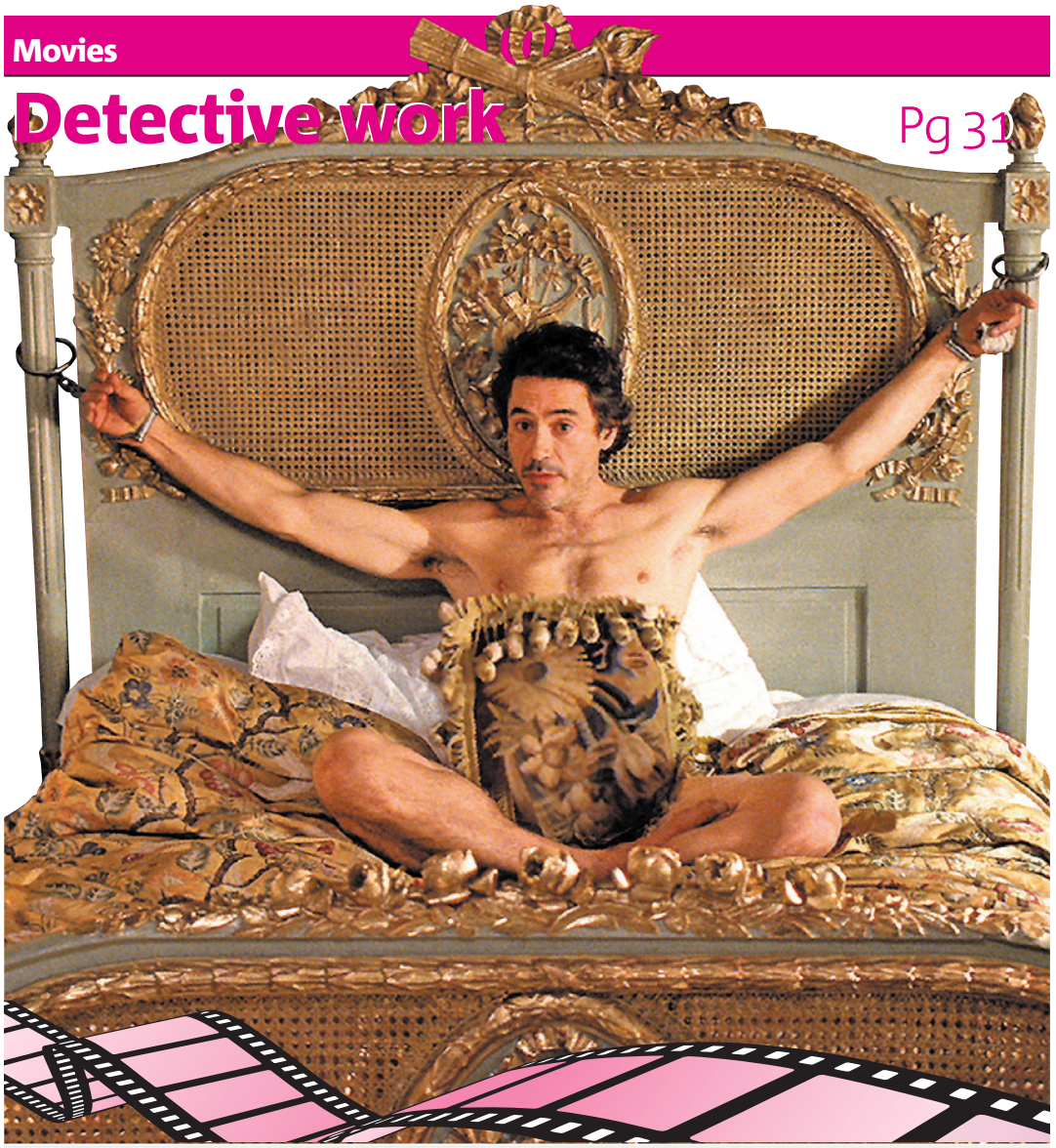
Movies&Entertainment

Movies

Detective work

Pg 31



Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law team up for the most recent film version detailing the antics of famous detective Sherlock Holmes. For his part, Downey Jr. says he went back to historical source material to convey an accurate portrayal.

Movies

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Avatar is a truly immersive experience, says reviewer.

Music

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Jackson's guitarist Orianthi Panagaris has a new album.

Television

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TV set decorators talk festive trinkets and knickknacks.

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At a glance
Avatar ●●●●½, Did You Hear About The Morgans ●½, The Young Victoria ●●●, Broken Embraces ●●●●●.

Movies

MOVIES EDITOR: KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Downey in the groove for Sherlock

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News

Robert Downey Jr. has an admittedly difficult history with London. "I was here 20 years ago and the food sucked," he says, though he's quick to add, "I kind of sucked 20 years ago. Far be it from me to say what was good when and where. I barely remember any of it." But with his new Sherlock Holmes set for release next week, he's feeling better about all things British.

Robert Downey Jr. couldn't have asked for a better co-star than Jude Law, he says.

Sherlock Holmes hits theatres next week

In bringing a new version of the famous detective to the screen, Downey was expecting more of the pressure of history. "It's funny. Sherlock Holmes would be the one you'd think has the most onus on it," he says of the characters he's played. But during filming, he insists he got the distinct feeling they were doing everything right. "Sometimes you just feel like you're in the right groove, and you feel the history and the legacy of something," he says. "Sometimes you just feel like you're being silently approved of from some other place and time."

A key element in rounding out Holmes was finding a Watson he worked well with, and Downey insists he couldn't have asked for a better co-star than Jude Law. "I'm used to people saying, 'Well, you and so-and-so, who's female, have this great chemistry,'" Downey says. "They're talking about Jude and I like we should be doing romantic comedies together."

While Downey's Holmes might not be something audiences necessarily find familiar, the actor insists it's a more accurate portrayal. "We were reinterpreting that character by actually going back to the source material — what he looked like, how he behaved, that he was a martial artist," Downey says.

While talk of martial arts and fighting has several Hollywood observers nervous, it was the bare-knuckle boxing scene that sealed the deal for Downey. "By the time we were done shooting that scene, I felt like we really had a handle on the movie," he says. "Not because we finally top-lit me and I showed my rippling abs and all that self-important garbage, but because it was a really bold thing and it could've gone really poorly, in which case the rest of the movie is trying to recover from a bad Guy Ritchie idea. But it was literally perfect, and I think it set the tone."

Looking forward, Downey is more than happy to be tied up with a successful pair of franchises. "Ideally, the Iron Man thing will pan out another time or two, a bit of Avengers going on. I have a feeling Sherlock is going to make a comeback. I think it's going to be well-received and do business."

But he admits he sees himself doing more than just acting. "I'd just like to parlay doing a bit of that stuff into making movies or doing stuff outside the realm of directly having to make faces for cash and chicken all the time."

On the web

- For movie photos, trailers and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies.

Basterds, Precious, Up in the Air lead SAGs

AWARDS Up in the Air, Precious and Inglourious Basterds led the Screen Actors Guild Awards with three nominations each Thursday, among them honours for George Clooney, Diane Kruger and Mo'Nique.

The Second World War rewrite Inglourious Basterds and the Harlem story Precious: Based on the Push: A Novel by Sapphire are competing for the guild's overall cast prize, along with the 1960s British drama An Education, the Iraq War tale The Hurt Locker and the musical Nine.

The corporate-downsizing tale Up in the Air was shut out of that category but scored a lead-actor nomination for Clooney as a frequent-flyer whiz and two supporting-actress slots, for Vera Farmiga as his new love and Anna Kendrick as his new protege.

The film's Canadian-born director, Jason Reitman, was not nominated.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Daryl Hannah says no to plastic cups

Daryl Hannah wants everyone to ditch plastic cups. The 49-year-old actress — who is a long-time environmental activist and has been arrested several times — said she wants the world to become more aware of the environment. FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK

Movies

MOVIES EDITOR: KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Avatar: Worth the wait

Avatar

Director: James Cameron
Stars: Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Giovani Ribisi
Classification: STC
Rating: ●●●●½

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News

Avatar, staring Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana, is described by our reviewer as mesmerizing.

The best word to describe watching James Cameron's long-awaited Avatar is, overwhelming. The tech-savvy director has created a truly immersive experience, utilizing 3-D and motion capture technology to create the brand-new, vibrant world of Pandora, and its slender, yellow-eyed, blue-skinned inhabitants, the Na'vi.

The smartest thing Cameron does is keep the story simple. It's something we've seen before: A native population stands in the way of the goals of an invading force — in this case, humans led by a greedy corporate honcho (Giovani Ribisi) and a marine colonel (Stephen Lang) displaying Apocalypse Now levels of menace.

As Sam Worthington's Jake is sent, via a human/Na'vi hybrid body (or avatar), to infiltrate the Na'vi, he falls in love with one of their own (Zoe Saldana) and takes their side. With an unchallenging story, Cameron leaves plenty of room for the technical splendor to do the heavy lifting, and he strikes a great balance.

The film isn't perfect, of course. Some of the exchanges and declarations are rather clunky, as dialogue was never really Cameron's strong suit. And there are several less-than-subtle criticisms of Bush administration foreign policy — something that apparently can happen when it takes five years to complete a film. But the overall effect is mesmerizing and well worth the wait.

• For an Avatar trailer, photos, and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies.

Hugh Grant plays a befuddled British lawyer and Sarah Jessica Parker plays a wealthy New Yorker in Did You Hear About The Morgans.

The Morgans is a forgettable rom-com

Did You Hear About The Morgans

Director: Marc Lawrence
Stars: Hugh Grant, Sarah Jessica Parker, Sam Eliot
Classification: PG
Rating: ●½

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

In general Hollywood romantic comedies are unbelievable star vehicles with reheated plotlines that are predictable from the first scene.

Expectations have to be lowered for most movies of this type because rom-com audiences simply don't want deviations in the established formula. However, from time to time something like Did You Hear About The Morgans comes along that is so ludicrous and clichéd that even people who enjoy these sorts of movies have to admit it's a failure.

Hugh Grant and Sarah Jessica Parker star as an estranged married couple and will surprise no one by appearing as a befuddled British lawyer and wealthy go-getter New Yorker respectively. One night, while trying to rebuild their bonds, they somehow witness a murder and end up in the witness protection program.

The couple are sent to Wyoming to stay with a cute country cop husband and wife team played by Sam Eliot and Mary Steenburgen. Do you think there's a chance that this troubled big city couple might work out their marital woes as they learn love simple country life?

The movie is a simplistic and inoffensive time waster and for some that will be enough. However, anyone whose brain is remotely active while watching the film is sure to be put off by a script so tired that it actually features a scene in which Steenburgen admits that her previous marriage squabbles were solved when her cowboy husband bought her a gun and a cow … you know, just like real country folk.

There's no semblance of reality here, it's a universe governed by clichés. While it's always nice to see Grant, Parker, Eliot, and Steenburgen trot out their established screen personas for laughs, no good will the audience has for the cast could possibly overcome the laundry list of problems with the half-hearted screenplay and ham-fisted direction. If anyone asks, you haven't heard anything about the Morgans and want nothing to do with them.

• For a Did You Hear About The Morgans trailer, photos, screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies.

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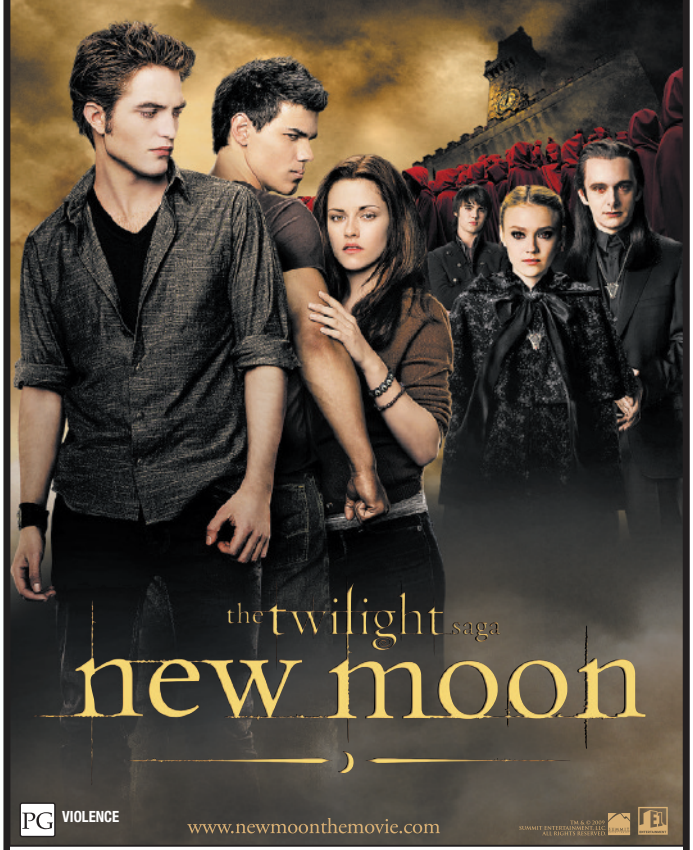

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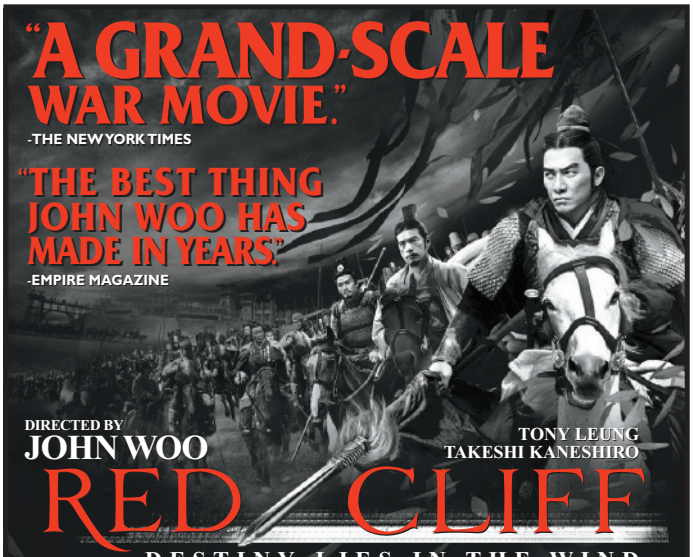

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Thor gets more stars

Kenneth Branagh's Thor cast just can't stop growing — or becoming more interesting with every new addition. The latest making the trip to Asgard is Rene Russo, who is set to play Frigga, the wife of Norse god Odin. IMDB.COM

Movies

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Terry Gilliam's homage to the late Heath Ledger

RICHARD CROUSE
for Metro Canada

The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus is a flight of fancy that was very nearly grounded in mid production. The untimely death of star Heath Ledger in January 2008 almost put the brakes on the film until Terry Gilliam had an idea: Why not continue filming with three of the late actor's friends taking his place?

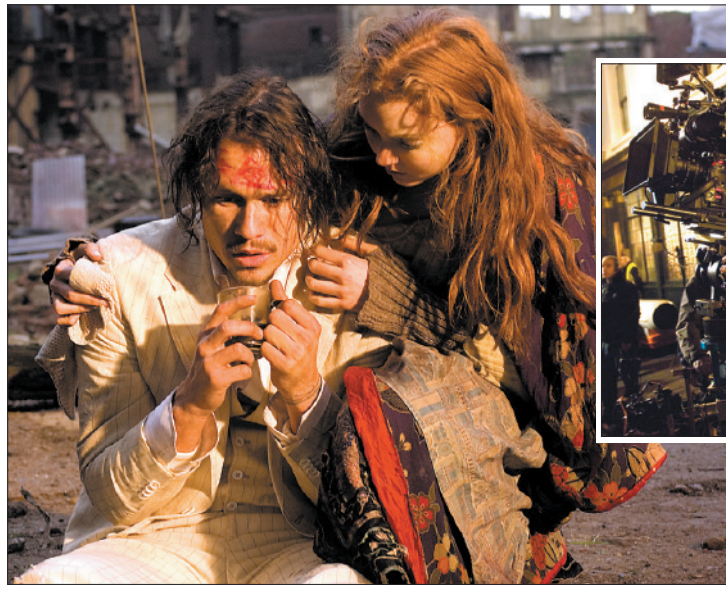
"I just started calling friends of Heath," Gilliam said. "It's as simple as that. Johnny (Depp), Colin (Farrell) and Jude (Law) turned up. It was important that they were friends, because I wanted to keep it in the family. I wanted people who were close to him because, as Colin said when he was doing his part, he was channelling Heath part of the time, so Heath was very much still alive in some sense.

"I didn't know whether this would work until I got back to London. We were working on autopilot. Working because that's what we decided to do and we got back to London and I showed the first cut to the post-sound guy, who hadn't been involved in the process, and he just assumed it was written that way. I thought, 'It works.'"

Co-star Christopher Plummer says he thinks it works better than the original script.

"The audience needs to be rejuvenated at the eleventh hour and they are by the presence of the three guys," he said. "I think Heath would have thoroughly approved of that and probably have been relieved not to go, 'OK fellas, it's time I had a break.'"

One of Heath's co-stars, however, had a harder time accepting the loss and the replacements. Lily Cole says she cried on the first day of shooting without Ledger, but soon realized that by stepping in Depp, Farrell and Law were doing a "brave and lovely thing" to honor the late actor.



Heath Ledger's untimely death almost halted production of Terry Gilliam's, inset, film The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus — that is until Ledger's friends stepped in.

Gilliam agrees, viewing the finished film as homage to Ledger. A credit where the director's name usually sits is a tribute to the late actor and the respect he earned.

"Contractually, it was supposed to be a Terry Gilliam Film," he said. "That's what the lawyers said, but I said, 'No way it's going to be that. It's going to be a film from Heath Ledger and friends.' The cast sat around one night and that idea came up and I said, 'This is it. Perfect. That's how we do it.'"

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Hathaway in car crash

Anne Hathaway was involved in a traffic collision in Los Angeles Wednesday afternoon. The 27-year-old movie beauty was sitting on the passenger seat of a car driven by her actor boyfriend, Adam Shulman, when the vehicle collided with a cyclist. ACESHOWBIZ.COM

Reel Time

MOVIES EDITOR: KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

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James Cameron is not the only perfectionist in the film industry

InFocus

Richard Crouse
mrchaos33@hotmail.com

In the gap between James Cameron's last theatrical feature, Titanic, and his new film, Avatar (in theatres this weekend) Clint Eastwood directed 11 movies, Michael Bay made six and even Uwe Boll, a director so reviled an online petition demands he stop making films, has made 15 in the time it took Cameron to make just one.

So what's the hold up?

Some suggest Cameron takes so long between gigs because his commitment to his projects is so intense he wants to be sure he is on the right track before camera starts to roll.

"I want you to know one thing," he allegedly told one producer, "once we embark on this adventure and I start to make this movie, the only way you'll be able to stop me is to kill me."

Also, Cameron isn't bound by the same considerations as most directors.

He wrote the script for Avatar in 1994 and was prepared to wait until special effects technology caught up with his vision.

The luxury of having time is what happens when you make the highest grossing movie in history, a fact he celebrates, wearing a t-shirt that reads "Time Means Nothing in the Face of Creativity."

"Once we embark on this adventure and I start to make this movie, the only way you'll be able to stop me is to kill me."
James Cameron

Like Cameron, Stanley Kubrick spent more time off movie sets than on. In a career that spanned 46 years he made only 13 movies but spent years developing pictures that never went into production — like Napoleon, an epic look at the life of the French Emperor that he expected to be "the best movie ever made."

Others choose long layoffs between projects for different reasons. Actor Casey Affleck (Ben's younger brother) had three movies released in 2007 but nothing else scheduled until 2010. Why the break?

"To be perfectly honest, I don't really enjoy playing anybody," he says, "except Casey Affleck lying on the couch watching the Red Sox … usually, when I'm working, I'm not really having a good time."

Then there's Daniel Day-Lewis, an actor whose lapses between projects makes Affleck look like a workaholic. The There Will Be Blood star routinely takes years off between films, once disappearing from the big screen for five years.

When asked why he doesn't work more often he said, "I like to cook things very slowly. I learnt early on that I couldn't jump from one kind of work to another. I did it a couple of times and it didn't work."

James Cameron has Stanley Kubrick-like dedication to his movies.

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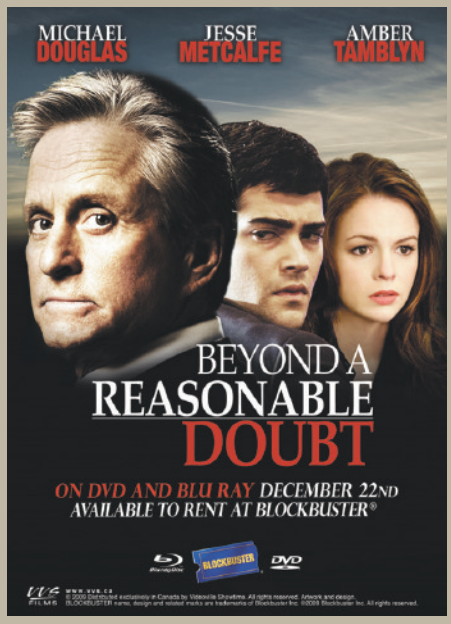

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metro

Singer back with X-Men

Director Bryan Singer appeared on MySpace's Avatar premiere on Wednesday night and announced his next film would be X-Men First Class. The new film is intended to tell the story of Cyclops, Jean Grey, and other characters from the comic book series. IMDB.COM

Blunt convincing as young Queen Victoria

The Young Victoria

Director: Jean-Marc Vallee
Stars: Emily Blunt, Rupert Friend
Classification: STC
Rating: ⊕⊕⊕

ADAM NAYMAN
Metro World News

"Vallee ... has some trouble finding an appropriately stately pace."

REVIEW It's a bit disappointing that Quebecois director Jean-Marc Vallee chose to follow up his ecstatic 2005 debut C.R.A.Z.Y. with a Golden Age melodrama. Why would such an unruly, contemporary talent willingly stuff himself into a period-piece corset?

That said, The Young Victoria, which stars Emily Blunt as the eponymous monarch and Rupert Friend as her ardent suitor Prince Albert, is perfectly acceptable filmmaking in the costume drama mode. As an examination of girl-in-a-gilded-cage melancholy, it's far more affecting than last year's similarly themed The Duchess (which seemed mostly like an excuse to dress Keira Knightley in a variety of fetching ensembles). Screenwriter Julian Fellowes frames the monarch not as an ascendant icon but a frustrated teenage girl, and it's no small compliment to say that the 26-year old Blunt comes off as credibly adolescent (including a few nicely played temper tantrums).

Vallee eschews the directorial pyrotechnics that marked C.R.A.Z.Y., but still has some trouble finding an appropriately stately pace: The introductions of several major characters and their various roles in palace intrigue (most of it revolving around the 18-year-old queen's ability to rule) feel rushed. Eventually, the film settles into a gauzy, romantic groove, building to a climax that feels emotionally authentic even as it plays rather fast and loose with the historical record.

Chipmunks bring back some high-pitched fun

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

Alvin & the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel opens next week.

Zachary Levi has gone from Chuck to Chipmunk.

The 29-year old actor who plays the titular electronics store clerk-turned-spy in TV's Chuck is honoured to become guardian of the world's most famous rock 'n' roll rodents in next week's release, Alvin & the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel.

"I was about eight when I was watching them in the Eighties," said Levi of the decades-old characters during a recent interview in Los Angeles. "And no matter how they've changed in their look and their medium — crude animation in the '80s to now — they're still the same guys. Kids will love them."

And children have definitely loved Alvin & The Chipmunks ever since they made their debut on a Minneapolis radio station singing The Chipmunk Song back in 1958. Further, their popularity has only spread as evidenced by the popularity of their 2007 full-length film debut, which earned over $350 million globally.

"Look, there's nothing cuter than a couple of chipmunks singing songs," explained Levi. "(Producers) Ross (Bagdasarian) and Janice (Karman) have taken that torch and maintained the innocence and the purity and the heart that the Chipmunks have always had. That's what I think keeps people with it."

In the latest cinematic installment of the franchise, Levi is entrusted to the singing trio when their proper guardian Dave (Jason Lee) is hospitalized at the expense of Alvin's wild on-stage antics. Ordered to send the chipmunks to school, Levi's bumbling Toby finds the miniature munks a handful — especially once they become smitten with their furry female counterparts, the Chipettes.

"It is [a little freaky] but it's so cool," said Levi of the Chipettes' high-pitched versions of contemporary pop songs. "[The producers] always make it relevant to wherever they need to be. They did that in the '50s; they do it now so it's cool."

While Levi added the cover of hit single Hot N Cold may have stood out, it was a variation of another Katy Perry song that the jokester would've preferred to hear.

"I was surprised they didn't have I Kissed a Squirrel (And I Liked It), but whatever, I wasn't in charge of the music."

No more Wild Hogs 2
Disney has cancelled plans for Wild Hogs 2: Bachelor Ride, a sequel to 2007's unlikely hit. It was to start shooting next year with John Travolta, Tim Allen, Martin Lawrence and William H Macy all in negotiations to reprise their roles. IMDB.COM

Reel Time

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Firth brings dignity to Ford's Single Man

NED EHRBAR
for Metro Canada

Colin Firth considers acting to be a bit like exploring. "Whenever I embark on a project, it's sort of an opportunity to plunge into a particular world, a different perception, to learn about maybe a time or a place that I didn't know much about," the celebrated British actor says.

And in his latest star turn, in Tom Ford's A Single Man — opening next week — Firth takes on a whole new world by inhabiting the life of George, a gay college professor dealing with the death of his partner.

Movie feature

But as much as he enjoys going exploring, playing a gay man wasn't that different from a normal day at the office. "Love is love," he says. "I don't really feel that there's anything different to play because the partner happens to be male. The person I'll be playing opposite is unlikely to be my lover anyway."

Of course, it being set in America in the early 1960s, his character's sexuality is very much an issue. But Firth sees the restrained manner in which Ford presents it as helpful. "I mean, there's sex running all the way through the movie, which I think is strengthened by the fact that we don't see anybody humping," he says. "We don't need to go into the territory of body functions. What's interesting about sex is its implications."

He's certainly not ashamed to heap more praise on fashion icon Ford, making his directorial debut. "It was very clear to me that this was not a vanity project. Just his choice of material indicated to me that this was not just a chance to show off his spring collection," Firth says. "He's never made a film before, but it didn't feel like working with a man who was a novice at all."

VANCOUVER

OMNIMAX THEATRE SCIENCE WORLD
1455 Quebec St., 604-443-7443

Adrenaline Rush: The Science of Risk (STC) Fri 3 Sat-Thu 4
Beavers (STC) A.M. Fri 11 Sat-Thu 2 Sat 8:20
Journey to Mecca in the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta (STC) Fri 12-2-4 Sat-Thu 12 Fri
The Light Before Christmas (STC) Fri 1 Sat-Thu 11-1-3-5 Sat 7:30
Van Gogh: Brush With Genius (STC) Fri 7:30

DUNBAR THEATRE
4555 Dunbar Street, 604-222-2991

Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri 7-9 Sat 2-4:15-7-9 Sun-Thu 2-4:15-7

FIFTH AVENUE CINEMAS
2110 Burrard Street, 604-734-7469

Broken Embraces (14A) Fri-Wed 1:15-4:15-7-9:45 Thu 1:15-4:15-7
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri-Sun 2-4-6-8-9:55 Mon 2-4-9:55 Tue-Wed 2-4-6-8-9:55 Thu 2-4-6-8
Invictus (PG) Fri-Wed 1-3:45-6:50-9:40 Thu 1-3:45-6:50
Up in the Air (PG) Fri-Wed 1:30-4:30-7:10-9:30 Thu 1:30-4:30-7:10
The Young Victoria (G) Fri-Wed 1:45-4:45-7:20-9:35 Thu 1:45-4:45-7:20

GRANVILLE
855 Granville St., 604-684-4000

Armored (PG) Fri 7-9:10 Sat-Wed 1:15-4:05-7-9:10 Thu 1:15-4:05-7
The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day (18A) Fri-Wed 9:20
An Education (PG) Fri 9:30 Sat 12:55-3:45-7:05-9:30 Sun 12:55-7:05-9:30 Mon-Wed 12:55-3:45-7:05-9:30 Thu 12:55-3:45-7:05
Everybody's Fine (PG) Fri 6:50 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:55-6:50 Mon 12:50-3:55 Tue-Thu 12:50-3:55-6:50
Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (STC) Fri 7 Sun 4
The Hurt Locker (14A) Fri-Sun 6:40-9:30 Mon-Wed 1-3:50-6:40-9:30 Thu 1-3:50-6:40
Old Dogs (G) Fri 6:45-9:35 Sat-Sun 1:10-4-6:45-9:35 Mon 1:10-4-9:35 Tue-Wed 1:10-4-6:45-9:35 Thu 1:10-4-6:45
Red Cliff (14A) Fri 8 Sat-Wed 12:45-4:15-8 Thu 12:45-4:15
Where the Wild Things Are (G) Fri 6:55 Sat-Thu 1:05-4:10-6:55
Zombieland (18A) Fri-Wed 9:15

HOLLYWOOD THEATRE
3123 W. Broadway, 604-738-3211
hollywoodtheatre.ca

Capitalism: A Love Story (PG) Fri 7:30-9:40 Sat-Sun 1:30-3:40-7:30-9:40 Mon-Wed 7:30-9:40
No Films Showing Today (STC) Thu

PACIFIC CINÉMATHÈQUE
1131 Howe Street, 604-688-3456
cinematheque.bc.ca

A City of Sadness (STC) Sun 7:15
Crude (STC) Tue-Wed 7:15-9:15
The Headless Woman (STC) Fri 9 Sat 7:15 Mon 9
Liverpool (STC) Fri 7:15 Sat 9 Mon 7:15
No Films Showing Today (STC) Thu

PARK THEATRE
3440 Cambie Street, 604-876-2747

Avatar 3D (14A) Fri-Wed 12-3:30-7-10:15 Thu 12-3:30-7

RIDGE THEATRE
3131 Arbutus Street, 604-738-6311

Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri 4-7-9:15 Sat-Sun 1:30-4-7-9:15 Mon-Wed 4-7-9:15 Thu 4-7

RIO ON BROADWAY
1660 E. Broadway, 604-878-Film
riotheatre.ca

Edward Scissorhands (STC) Fri
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Sun-Thu 1:30-4-7-9
The Nightmare Before Christmas (STC) Fri 12
Pointed Sticks (STC) Sat 2:30-9

SCOTIABANK THEATRE VANCOUVER
900 Burrard St., 604-630-1407

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 2:10-6:45-10:30
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri-Sun 12-3:45-7:45-11:15 No Passes Mon-Thu 12-3:45-7:45
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:15-11:30-2-3-3:20-6:15-6:50-7:10-10:10-10:40-11
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:30-3:30-7-10
The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d'Hoffmann (STC) Sat 10
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:50-4-7:30-10:45
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:10-12:40-3:10-3:40-6:40-7:20-9:40-10:20

TINSELTOWN
International Village, 88 West Pender, 3rd floor, 604-806-0799
cinemark.com

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 12:05-1:25-2:30-3:45-4:55-6:05-7:15-8:25-9:35 No Passes Thu 12:05-1:25-2:30-3:45-4:55-6:05-7:15-8:25
The Blind Side (PG) No Passes Fri-Wed 1:15-4:15-7:10-10:05 No Passes Thu 1:15-4:15-7:10
Brothers (PG) Fri-Wed 12-2:35-5:10-7:45-10:20 Thu 12-2:35-5:10-7:45
Disney's A Christmas Carol 3D (G) No Passes Fri-Wed 12:15-2:40-5:7:20-9:45 No Passes Thu 12:15-2:40-5-7:20
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri-Wed 1:10-3:30-5:40-7:55-10:10 Thu 1:10-3:30-5:40-7:55
Helen (14A) No Passes Fri-Sun 12:50-4-7:05-9:50 No Passes Mon 12:50-4-9:50 No Passes Tue-Wed 12:50-4-7:05-9:50 No Passes Thu 12:50-4-7:05
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri-Tue 12:10-1:30-3:10-4:30-6:15-7:30-9:15-10:25 No Passes Wed 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:25 No Passes Thu 1:30-4:30-7:30
Me and Orson Welles (PG) No Passes Fri-Tue 1:55-4:35-7:15-9:55
Ninja Assassin (18A) No Passes Fri-Wed 12:45-3:05-5:30-7:50-10:15 No Passes Thu 12:45-3:05-5:30-7:50
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Wed 12:20-2:50-5:25-8-10:30 Thu 12:20-2:50-5:25-8
The Princess and the Frog (G) No Passes Fri-Wed 12:55-4:05-6:50-9:20 No Passes Thu 12:55-4:05-6:50
The Road (14A) Fri-Wed 1:40-4:20-7-9:40 Thu 1:40-4:20-7

VANCITY THEATRE
Vancouver International Film Centre
1181 Seymour Street, 604-683-Film
vifc.org

La Danse: The Paris Opera Ballet (STC) Mon-Wed 7 Thu 3
Global Lens Film Festival (STC) Fri-Sun

VAN EAST CINEMA
2290 Commercial Drive, 604-251-1313
vaneast.com

Planet 51 (G) Sat-Sun 5:10
A Serious Man (PG) Fri-Thu 7-9:10

NORTH SHORE

ESPLANADE 6
200 West Esplanade, 604-983-2762

The Blind Side (PG) Fri 6:50-9:45 Sat-Thu 12:40-3:50-6:50-9:45
A Christmas Carol (STC) Fri 6:45-9:20 Sat-Thu 1:10-3:45-6:45-9:20
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri 7:10-9:30 No Passes Sat-Thu 1:20-4:05-7:10-9:30
An Education (PG) Fri 7:20-9:50 Sat-Tue 1-4:10-7:20-9:50
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri 6:40-9:40 No Passes Sat-Thu 12:30-3:35-6:40-9:40
The Princess and the Frog (G) No Passes Fri 7-9:25 No Passes Sat-Thu 12:50-4:20-7-9:25
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 1-4:10-7:20-9:50

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Screen Times

This week's new releases are highlighted in pink.

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., DEC. 18 TO THURS., DEC. 24. TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. COMPLETE LISTINGS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT METRONEWS.CA/MOVIES.

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PARK & TILFORD
333 Brooksbank Ave., 604-985-3911

2012 (PG) Fri 6:30-10 Sat-Wed 2-6:30-10 Thu 2-6:30
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 12:20-2:30-4:45-7:10-9:30 No Passes Thu 12:20-2:30-4:45-7:10
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri 8 No Passes Sat-Wed 1-4:30-8 No Passes Thu 1-4:30
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri 6:40-10:10 No Passes Sat-Wed 12-3:20-6:40-10:10 No Passes Thu 12-3:20-6:40
Brothers (PG) Fri 6:45-9:30 Sat 3:30-6:45-9:30 Sun-Tue 12:20-3:30-6:45-9:30
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri 7-9:20 Sat-Tue 12:30-2:50-7-9:20 Wed 4:15-7-9:20 Thu 12:30-2:50-7
The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d'Hoffmann (STC) Sat 10
The Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker (STC) Wed 1
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri 6:50-9:50 Sat-Wed 12:10-3-6:50-9:50 Thu 12:10-3-6:50

RICHMOND

RICHMOND CENTRE 6
6551 #3 Road, 604-273-7173

2012 (PG) Fri 3:35-6:55-10:10 Sat-Sun 12:15-3:35-6:55-10:10 Mon-Wed 3:35-6:55-10:10 Thu 3:35-6:55
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 3:50-7:15-9:45 No Passes Thu 3:50-7:15
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri 3:25-6:50-10:15 No Passes Sat-Sun 12-3:25-6:50-10:15 No Passes Mon-Wed 3:25-6:50-10:15 No Passes Thu 3:25-6:50
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri 3:45-7:10-9:40 No Passes Sat-Sun 12:20-3:45-7:10-9:40 No Passes Mon-Wed 3:45-7:10-9:40 No Passes Thu 3:45-7:10
Ninja Assassin (18A) Fri 3:50-7:15-9:45 Sat-Sun 12:25-3:50-7:15-9:45 Mon-Tue 3:50-7:15-9:45
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri 3:40-7-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:10-3:40-7-9:30 Mon-Wed 3:40-7-9:30 Thu 3:40-7
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri 3:30-7:05-10 Sat-Sun 12:05-3:30-7:05-10 Mon-Wed 3:30-7:05-10 Thu 3:30-7:05

SILVERCITY RIVERPORT
14211 Entertainment Way, 604-272-7280

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 12-3:40-7:20-10:45
3 Idiots (STC) Wed-Thu 1-5-9
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed-Thu 12-12:30-2:30-3-5-5:30-7:20-8-9:40-10:30
Armored (PG) Fri 1:15-4:25-7:40-10:25 Sat 4:25-7:40-10:25 Sun-Tue 1:15-4:25-7:40-10:25
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:45-1-3:30-5-7:15-9-11
Avatar: An IMAX 3D Experience (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:30-3-6:30-10
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 12:40-3:45-6:45-9:50
Brothers (PG) Fri 12:35-3:15-7:40-10:50 Sat 3:15-7:40-10:50 Sun-Tue 12:35-3:15-7:40-10:50 Wed-Thu 3:30-7:15-10
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:05-4:05-7:30-10:15
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Thu 12:25-3:25-6:45-9:30
Everybody's Fine (PG) Fri-Tue 10:05
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:05-3:35-7:05-10:30
The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d'Hoffmann (STC) Sat 10
Ninja Assassin (18A) Fri-Tue 1:20-4:20-7:20-9:55 Wed 4:20-7:20-9:55 Thu 1:20-4:20-7:20-9:55
Old Dogs (G) Fri-Tue 12:10-4:6:55-9:35
Planet 51 (G) Fri-Tue 12:55-3:20-6:40 Wed-Thu 12:55
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Thu 12:55-3:50-7:20-10:20
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:30-12:30-2:15-3:55-4:50-6:50-7:35-9:45-10:15
The Road (14A) Fri-Tue 11:55-3:10-7:10-10:10
The Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker (STC) Wed 1
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:15-4:15-7:25-10:40
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 12:50-4-7:10-10:25
The Young Victoria (G) Fri-Thu 12:45-4:10-7-10

BURNABY

DOLPHIN CINEMAS
4555 E. Hastings St., 604-293-0332

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) Wed 1-3-5-7-9 Thu 1-3-5-7
Avatar (14A) Fri 6:30-9:45 Sat-Wed 1-3:15-6:30-9:45 Thu 1-3:15-6:30
Old Dogs (G) Fri 7 Sat-Tue 1-3-5-7
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Tue 9

SILVERCITY METROPOLIS
4700 Kingsway Ave., 604-435-7474

2012 (PG) Fri 11:30-3:05-6:50-10:20 Sat 3:05-6:50-10:20 Sun-Thu 11:30-3:05-6:50-10:20
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 12:15-2:20-4:30-7:9:40 No Passes Thu 11:35-2-4:30-7-9:40
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:15-1-3-5-6:45-9-10:30
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 12:15-3:30-6:40-9:55
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:10-3:15-7:15-10
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Tue 11:35-2-4:30-7-9:40
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12-3:20-6:55-10:15
The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d'Hoffmann (STC) Sat 10
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:20-1:45-4:15-6:45-9:30
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 11:45-3:10-6:35-9:45
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:40-3:25-7:30-10:45

STATION SQUARE
220-6200 McKay Ave., 604-434-7711

Armored (PG) Fri 4:25-7:25-10:25 Sat-Sun 1:25-4:25-7:25-10:25 Mon-Wed 4:25-7:25-10:25 Thu 4:25-7:25
Brothers (PG) Fri 4-7:10 Sat-Sun 1-4-7:10 Mon-Wed 4-7:10 Thu 4-7
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri 4:30-7:30-10:30 Sat-Sun 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:30 Mon-Wed 4:30-7:30-10:30 Thu 4:30-7:30
The Men Who Stare at Goats (PG) Fri 4:10-7:10-10:10 Sat-Sun 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:10 Mon-Wed 4:10-7:10-10:10 Thu 4:10-7:10
Ninja Assassin (18A) Fri 4:05-7:05-10:05 Sat-Sun 1:05-4:05-7:05-10:05 Mon-Wed 4:05-7:05-10:05 Thu 4:05-7:05
Old Dogs (G) Fri 4:20-7:20-10:20 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:20-7:20-10:20 Mon-Wed 4:20-7:20-10:20 Thu 4:20-7:20
Planet 51 (G) Fri 4:15-7:15-10:15 Sat-Sun 1:15-4:15-7:15-10:15 Mon-Wed 4:15-7:15-10:15 Thu 4:15-7:15

NEW WEST/ COQUITLAM

SILVERCITY COQUITLAM
170 Schoolhouse Street, 604-523-2911

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 11:45-3:15-7:05-10:35
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 11:35-12-1:55-2:25-4:20-4:55-6:45-7:25-9:15-9:50 No Passes Thu 11:35-12-1:55-2:25-4:20-4:55-6:45-7:20-9:15-9:50
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 2-6:15-10
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Sat 11:30-12:50-3:10-4:40-7-9-10:45 No Passes Sun 11:30-12:45-3:10-4:40-7-9-10:45 No Passes Mon-Thu 11:30-12:50-3:10-4:40-7-9-10:45
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 11:50-3:40-7:45-10:40
The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day (18A) Fri 12:50-4-7:20-10:20 Sat 4-7:20-10:20 Sun-Tue 12:50-4-7:20-10:20 Wed 4-7:20-10:20 Thu 12:50-4-7:20-10:20
Brothers (PG) Fri-Thu 1-4:30-7:25-10:10
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:30-3:30-7:10-10:15
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:35-10:05
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri-Tue 12:25-3:25
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:55-3:20-6:55-10:35
The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d'Hoffmann (STC) Sat 10
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 12:05-3:05-6:50-9:40
Planet 51 (G) Fri-Thu 11:40-1:55-4:25-6:50-9:35
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:35-6:45-10:30
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 11:35-2:05-4:40-7:15-9:50 Fri-Thu 12:15-3:40-6:55-9:35
The Road (14A) Fri-Thu 12:55-4:10-7:50-10:50
The Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker (STC) Wed 1
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 12-3:6:40-9:45
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 12:05-3:05-6:50-9:40
The Young Victoria (G) Fri-Thu 12:10-3:50-7:05-10:25

SURREY

CLOVA
5732-176th St., Surrey, 604-541-9527

2012 (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-4:30
Couples Retreat (PG) Fri-Thu 4:30
Everybody's Fine (PG) Fri-Thu 2:25-6:30
Law Abiding Citizen (14A) Fri-Thu 8:55
The Men Who Stare at Goats (PG) Fri-Thu 8:20
Ninja Assassin (18A) Fri-Thu 8:35
Planet 51 (G) Fri-Thu 12:30-2:30-4:30-6:30

STRAWBERRY HILL GRANDE
12161-72nd Ave, Surrey, 604-501-9400

2012 (PG) Fri-Tue 12:05-3:25-6:45-10:10
3 Idiots (STC) Wed-Thu 12:10-4:15-8
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed-Thu 11:55-2:20-4:45-7:15-9:30
Armored (PG) Fri-Tue 12:45-3:40-7:15-9:30
Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1-4:50-9
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Thu 11:45-3:20-7:10:35
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Thu 12:20-3:50-7:10-10:05
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:40-4-7:20-10:20
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Thu 12:15-2:40-5:05-7:25-9:50
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:30-3:45-7:05-10:15
Paa (PG) Fri-Tue 12:10-3:30-6:50-9:55
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:30-10
Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year (PG) Fri-Thu 12:50-4:10-7:35
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:25-3:55-6:55-9:45
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 12:05-3:25-6:45-10:10

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2012 (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Wed 3:15-6:50-10:20 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Thu 3:15-6:50
3 Idiots (STC) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Wed-Thu 12:20-3:55-7:45
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Wed 12:15-1:15-2:30-4-4:45-7-7:30-9:30-10 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Thu 12:15-1:15-2:30-4-4:45-7-7:30
Armored (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 1:15-4:45-7:30-10
Avatar 3D (14A) Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 12:01-1-5-9 Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Wed 1-3-5-6:45-9-10:30 Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Thu 1-3-5-6:45 Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 3-6:45-10:30
The Blind Side (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 12:40-3:40-6:40-9:50
Brothers (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 12:55-4:10-7:20-9:55
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 1:30-4:30-7:15-10:15 Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Wed 12:30-4:30-7:15-10:15 Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Thu 12:30-4:30-7:15
Invictus (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 12:35-3:50-6:55-10:10 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Mon 12:35-3:50-6:55-10:10 Stadium Seating Tue 12:35-3:50-6:55-10:10 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Wed 12:35-3:50-6:55-10:10 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Thu 12:35-3:50-6:55
Ninja Assassin (18A) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1:10-4:20-7:25-10:25
Old Dogs (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 12:50-4-7-9:40
The Princess and the Frog (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 12:45-4:15-7:10-9:45 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Mon-Wed 12:45-4:15-7:10-9:45 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Thu 12:45-4:15-7:10
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Wed 1:05-4:05-7:05-10:05 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Thu 1:05-4:05-7:05
Up in the Air (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Wed 12:55-4:10-7:20-9:55 Dolby Stereo Digital, No Passes, Stadium Seating Thu 12:55-4:10-7:20

RIALTO
1732-152nd Street, White Rock, 604-541-9527, criteriontheatres.com

The Blind Side (PG) Fri 7-9:25 Sat-Sun 2-7-9:25 Mon-Tue 7-9:25
The Road (14A) Fri 7:10-9:15 Sat-Sun 2:10-7:10-9:15 Mon-Wed 7:10-9:15 Thu 2:10
Up in the Air (PG) Wed 7-9:20 Thu 2

CRITERION 4 WHITE ROCK
2381 King George Highway, 604-531-7456, criteriontheatres.com

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 2:10-7-8:45 No Passes Thu 2:10

The Princess and the Frog is Disney's latest offering.

m.metronews.ca

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Learn how to scan the barcode with the instructions at the top of pg 3

Avatar (14A) No Passes Fri 6:30-9:35 No Passes Sat-Wed 2-6:30-9:35 No Passes Thu 2
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri 7:30-9:30 Sat-Wed 2:30-7:30-9:30 Thu 2:30
The Princess and the Frog (G) No Passes Fri 7:15-9:05 No Passes Sat-Wed 2:20-7:15-9:05 No Passes Thu 2:20
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri 7-9:40 Sat-Wed 2:10-7-9:40 Thu 2:10

COLOSSUS LANGLEY
20090-91A Ave, Langley, 604-513-8747

2012 (PG) Fri-Wed 11:40-3:20-6:50-10:20 Thu 11:40-3:20-6:50
Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) No Passes Wed 11:30-11:55-1:55-2:20-4:15-4:45-6:45-7:15-9:30-10:05 No Passes Thu 11:30-11:55-1:55-2:20-4:15-4:45-6:45-7:15
Armored (PG) Fri-Tue 11:55-2:20-4:45-7:15-10:05
Avatar 3D (14A) No Passes Fri-Wed 11-12-2:30-3:30-6-7-10-10:30 No Passes Thu 11-12-2:30-3:30-6-7
Avatar: An IMAX 3D Experience (14A) No Passes Fri-Wed 11:30-3-6:30-10 No Passes Thu 11:30-3-6:30
The Blind Side (PG) Fri-Wed 12:35-3:50-7:10-10:15 Thu 12:35-3:50-7:10
Brothers (PG) Fri-Wed 12:45-4-7:30-10:15 Thu 12:45-4-7:30
Did You Hear About The Morgans? (PG) No Passes Fri-Wed 1-4:10-7:20-10:20 No Passes Thu 1-4:10-7:20
Disney's A Christmas Carol (G) Fri-Wed 12:25-3:05-5:30-8-10:25 Thu 12:25-3:05-5:30-8
Fantastic Mr. Fox (G) Fri-Tue 11:30-1:50-4:15-6:45-9:30
Invictus (PG) No Passes Fri-Wed 12:10-3:40-7:05-10:25 No Passes Thu 12:10-3:40-7:05
Law Abiding Citizen (14A) Fri-Wed 9:45
The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d'Hoffmann (STC) Sat 10
Ninja Assassin (18A) Fri-Tue 12:55-4:20-7:35-10:05
Old Dogs (G) Fri-Tue 12:40-4:05-6:45-9:35 Wed 4:05-6:45-9:35 Thu 12:40-4:05-6:45
Planet 51 (G) Fri-Thu 12:05-2:25-4:50-7:10
Precious: Based on the Novel ``Push'' by Sapphire (14A) Fri-Wed 12:20-3:50-6:55-9:50 Thu 12:20-3:50-6:55
The Princess and the Frog (G) Fri-Wed 11:50-12:50-2:35-3:45-5-6:55-7:30-9:40-10:10 Thu 11:50-12:50-2:35-3:45-5-6:55-7:30
The Road (14A) Fri 12:15-3:55-7:25-10:30 Sat 3:55-7:25-10:30 Sun-Wed 12:15-3:55-7:25-10:30 Thu 12:15-3:55-7:25
The Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker (STC) Wed 1
The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG) Fri-Wed 12:30-3:35-7-9:55 Thu 12:30-3:35-7
Up in the Air (PG) No Passes Wed 12:55-4:20-7:35-10:05 No Passes Thu 12:55-4:20-7:35

Billboard's top albums

1. I Dreamed a Dream, Susan Boyle; 2. My Christmas, Andrea Bocelli; 3. Glee Soundtrack, Various Artists; 4. Fearless (Platinum Edition), Taylor Swift; 5. Play On, Carrie Underwood. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Music

Platinum Blonde joins music hall

BAND The '80s pop band Platinum Blonde is being inducted into the Canadian Music and Broadcast Industry Hall of Fame.

Known for such melodic new wave hits as Standing In The Dark, Crying Over You and It Doesn't Really Matter, the band will be recognized at a luncheon March 12, 2010 in Toronto during Canadian Music Week.

Vocalist Mark Holmes, drummer Chris Steffler and guitarist Sergio Galli broke onto the music scene in 1982 with catchy singles, big blond hair and glam-rock style.

Keyboardist Kenny MacLean joined the band in 1985, roughly four years before they would split up. MacLean died in 2008 at age 52 just as he was preparing to release a solo CD. THE CANADIAN PRESS

TOP 10 RINGTONES

1 Tik Tok Ke$ha
2 Satellite Heart Anya Marina
3 So Hard Rihanna
4 Bad Romance Lady Gaga
5 Whatcha Say Jason DeRulo
6 Fireflies Owl City
7 Party in the USA Miley Cyrus
8 Telephone Lady Gaga
9 I Can Transform You Chris Brown
10 Empire State of Mind Jay-Z

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ROGERS

Orianthi and the King of Pop

Guitarist was hired to back Michael Jackson on This Is it comeback

KEITH CARMAN
for Metro Canada

Rock guitarist Orianthi Panagaris has just released her sophomore full-length Believe.

While the album gleans respect thanks to Panagaris' prodigiousness and a notable history with highlights such as performing alongside fellow fret board gurus Carlos Santana, Eric Clapton and Steve Vai (not to mention backing Prince and Carrie Underwood during her recent Grammy Awards performance), the Australian-born/Greek-bred instrumentalist has an even greater credit to her name.

Panagaris was the guitarist for the late Michael Jackson on his unrealized This Is It string of comeback concerts. So despite the thrill of seeing her own talent gain accolades, the dextrous dame understands why people feel more inclined to discuss her brief tenure as six-string samurai for the King of Pop.

"I was shocked when it happened," she reflects with a hint of melancholy. "I went to try out for the band playing the solo for Beat It. I didn't know what to expect but he was so happy with the way I played, he hired me on the spot. I couldn't believe it."

Orianthi Panagaris was the guitarist for Michael Jackson on his unrealized This Is It comeback.

Over the course of the ensuing three months, Panagaris (who typically utilizes her first name) and the rest of the This Is It band routinely rehearsed with Jackson and his troupe, creating a purportedly dazzling return to form for the disparaged King.

Yet, as we all know, mere weeks before the show was to go on, Jackson passed away. Reflecting, Panagaris reveals that Jackson's essence captured her so deeply, she feels little remorse at not getting to strut her stuff for the string of 50 sold-out gigs.

"We didn't get to do the shows but we got the chance to play music with him for three months," she smiles. "He was so giving to all of us. He wanted us all to have our moment and put everything he had into it. He was happy and enthusiastic about it."

"People say he didn't want to do it but you can tell with (the This Is It film) how much he really did. We're never gonna get to play with him again but we got to see how wonderful he was as person and an artist. We were also the last people to be around him. We'll never forget that. It's life-changing."

"I didn't know what to expect but (Michael Jackson) was so happy with the way I played, he hired me on the spot. I couldn't believe it."
Orianthi Panagaris

Such an astounding experience is also the reason Panagaris forgives minds for inquiring more about her time with Jackson than her new record. She expects it, she laughs, noting that overall, she is merely thankful to have been part of such a historical moment.

"It doesn't bother me at all that people ask about my time with MJ more than Believe. I understand that. (The album) was done before I was hired. I have a great band that knew how working with MJ was a dream come true. I don't think it hindered it at all. I'm grateful to have been a part of (This Is It) and now I'm focusing on this."

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Amazon.ca's top albums
1. I Dreamed a Dream, Susan Boyle; 2. My Christmas, Andrea Bocelli; 3. Crazy Love, Michael Bublé; 4. Glee Soundtrack, Various Artists; 5. The Fall, Norah Jones. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Music

Music that made a difference

The ten best albums from the last ten years

SoundCheck

With two weeks left in The Decade with No Name — Seriously. what will the people of the future call the first decade of the 21st century? Did we ever come up with a name for the years between 1900 and 1909? — 'tis time for the compiling of "best of" lists.

Here are my picks for the ten best from the last ten years in order of release date.

Agaetis Byrjun, Sigur Ros (Early 2000): OK, so it was actually released in 1999, but it wasn't until Y2K safely passed that people began to embrace its sublime mellowness. Buy one now. Iceland needs your hard currency.

Kid A, Radiohead (Oct. 2, 2001): Under pressure to follow up 1997's OK Computer, Radiohead deconstructed itself in order to assemble an astonishingly smooth record that doesn't sound like it was made by a rock band.

White Blood Cells, The White Stripes (July 3, 2001): No bass player? Brother and sister or ex-husband-and-wife? Didn't matter. She was the mute timekeeper and Jack White was quietly announcing that this was going to be his decade.

Coldplay, above, and The Strokes, left, delivered two of the last decade's best albums.

This Is It, The Strokes (Sept 25, 2001): Yes, several of the Strokes were trust-fund private school kids, but that certainly didn't stop them from making a street smart record that really kicked off the decade's fascination with indie rock.

Songs for the Deaf, Queens of the Stone Age (Aug. 27, 2002): Josh Homme out front, Dave Grohl on drums. In retrospect, the ancestor of Them Crooked Vultures.

A Rush of Blood to the Head, Coldplay (April 1, 2003): Parachutes was a fine record, but it certainly didn't hint towards the superstardom that would come rushing in with the next album.

Elephant, White Stripes (April 1, 2003): Seven Nation Army and the Hardest Button to Button cemented Jack White's rep as the guitar god of the '00s.

American Idiot, Green Day (Sept. 21, 2004): Aging punk rockers mount comeback with punk rock opera. Didn't see that coming.

Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not/Arctic Monkeys (Feb. 21, 2006): They went from getting guitars for Christmas to the biggest new band in the U.K. in just a couple of years. And Alex Turner has become one of the decade's best lyricists.

In Rainbow/Radiohead (Oct. 10, 2007): Ask people to pay what they think the album is worth? Good luck

Ali Milner mixes musical genres

BRIAN COULTON
for Metro Canada

As a music fan, Ali Milner gets bored pretty easily.

So when she set out to make her recently released sophomore album I Dare You, the 19-year-old singer/songwriter, who divides her time between Vancouver and her native Whistler, B.C., said she made a conscious effort to impart variety on her own listeners.

"When we were writing, I remember thinking, 'Gosh, does this song sound the same as the last song we wrote, or the one before that?'" she said, "I want them all to be fresh, different and a new experience for the listener."

Milner's motivation is clear on I Dare You. The album, largely comprised of love songs that feature her on keys and vocals, diverts from the jazz-driven sound she put into gear on her self-titled debut at age 14. This time, reggae, R&B and rock accompany the record's jazz-based-pop numbers, underscored by Milner's sweet, strong vocals.

She can't quite pinpoint how her diverse musical influences developed. Drawing inspiration from artists as mixed as Sam Cooke, Puccini and Led Zeppelin, Milner boils it down to innate feeling, "I just get into different moods and want to listen to different stuff.".

Though her ear may be in many places, Milner's mind appears focused. Lyrically and melodically, she said she's grown into a level of confidence that allowed her to fashion an album in a more personal niche as she's matured.

"I definitely feel I'm more certain who I am," she said, "(In between albums) I played at the Four Seasons in Whistler a couple times a week for two years. With all those hours under my belt, my performing is a lot more confident."

I Dare You is the new album from singer-songwriter Ali Milner.

Milner's performance practice has already paid off. She won glowing praise from Sarah McLachlan after performing at a children's hospital event. And Michael Bublé invited her to sing with him on stage at a post-Juno Awards party.

"It's really interesting gratification to get because I feel like they're along the same vein of music that I am," a sentiment Milner said encourages her to think she, too, could make music a life-long vocation.

But first, she's set on improving her songwriting.. "That's what cultivates a life-long career."

In Concert

- Ali Milner plays the Nita Lake Lounge in Whistler on Dec. 23 and Dec. 27.

The Beautiful Life back from the dead
Ashton Kutcher's canceled CW drama, The Beautiful Life: TBL, will live again — on YouTube. Citing fan requests, Kutcher put all five episodes on YouTube on Thursday. TVGUIDE.COM

Television

TV set decorators get into the festive spirit

Imagine if your holiday decorations were going to be seen by millions of people. That's the challenge for many TV-show set decorators as all the Christmas-themed episodes roll around.

"Decorations should be what's appropriate for the characters and story," says Hannah Montana set decorator Wendy Fine. "You don't put things outrageous that shouldn't be outrageous. If all they're talking about is the set, the sets were overdone or the actors were really bad."

Like other television show set decorators, she scoured stores and online sites for Christmas trinkets, knickknacks and decorations months before the actual holiday. Most holiday episodes are filmed in the summer and air in late fall.

Mad Men set decorator Amy Wells didn't grow up celebrating Christmas, but "the moment I got out of my parents' house, I got a lot of vintage Christmas decorations," she said. "I had a box full of stuff. Old mercury-style bowls in light frosty pink and light frosty aqua."

Wells put those vintage finds to good use on the AMC show, set in the early 1960s at fictional New York advertising firm Sterling Cooper. Season three's Mad Men finale, which aired Nov. 8, featured everything from a classic Christmas wreath to a fake tree in the office. Each secretary desk at Sterling Cooper had some kind of decoration, including holiday candy bowls, holiday candy, china Santas and candy canes.

Authenticity, for Wells, is paramount.

"We make it look like the art department didn't come in. We make it look like it's real," Wells said. "The decoration was authentic decoration from that day."

"What was available to people back then was much more limited. There were no twinkle lights," Wells said.

For Hannah Montana, Fine was asked to find traditional Christmas decorations such as strung-up cards and a red-ribboned wreath for the Disney show's season three holiday episode.

The set included the California house that teenager Miley Stewart's family moved into from Tennessee.

"The decorations in the house were supposed to be things they may have brought from Tennessee, like traditional Christmas lights," said Fine. "There was nothing very designer about it. It was homey."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

YTV is a trade-mark of the Corus™ Entertainment group of companies.

Miley Cyrus on the set of Hannah Montana

A TV show is no longer just a TV show — it's music and more

TELEVISION These days, programming for the tube is a multi-platform endeavour, encompassing online, gaming, music, DVDs, toys and tours in a bid to keep budgets in the black and eyeballs glued to the small screen.

From Heroes to Lost, High School Musical to Glee, recent experiments are pointing to radical shifts in the way stories are told and the way viewers consume them, with observers predicting bold changes to the TV business as it emerges from a decade of fragmented audiences and dwindling advertising revenues.

"Over the next 10 years, literally what we consider traditional ways of telling stories are going to completely fall apart," predicts Peter Vamos of the Banff World Television Festival.

"We have a generation of kids who ... all they've ever known is the validation that is derived from self-expression through two-way communication through the Internet
Jeff Gomez

"If it's a good story, it's a good story and if it entertains you, it entertains you and you're not going to have to fit these things within certain types of story arcs — there can be any number of different ways of doing this sort of stuff."

Heroes offers fans more with graphic novels and online content.

"There will be a fairly dramatic shift soon, even for content that's established in Canada," adds Jeff Gomez, head of the New York-based digital production company Starlight Runner Entertainment. "There'll be more and more of this kind of cross-platform implementation ... You're going to see really artful and emotionally engaging implementation."

What they're talking about is a phenomenon known as transmedia, in which a story might start on television, evolve online in a new direction and then shift again to take shape as a novel.

Mediawire CEO Ned Sherman points to Heroes as a prime example of the transmedia phenomenon, noting it's generated hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue for NBC Universal through things including online content, magazines, action figures, interactive websites, graphic novels and webisodes.

"Every sign is that network television is on the decline and cable continues to do well," notes Sherman.

"From what I hear out there the whole system is under evaluation right now"

Canadian TV production is poised to see an influx of such interactive initiatives with the merging of the Canadian Television Fund and the Canada New Media Fund into the Canada Media Fund, set to launch in April 2010.

The new fund will require applicants to make their projects available on at least two platforms, one of which must be television. Projects produced in high definition will be favoured.

"That is the way of the future. We have a generation of kids who are getting older now, they're headed toward puberty and all they've ever known is the Internet, and so all they've ever known is the validation that is derived from self-expression through two-way communication through the Internet," says Gomez.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Gilmore Girls are back

It's a Gilmore Girls mother-daughter reunion on NBC. Gilmore matriarch Kelly Bishop has booked a multi-episode arc on Mercy. Bishop's TV offspring, Lauren Graham, is also starring on a Peacock drama, Parenthood. **EW.COM**

Television

Opera gives cash to Atlanta school

IT FEELS GOOD TO GIVE A private middle school, Ron Clark Academy, in inner-city Atlanta has received $1.5 million US from Oprah Winfrey.

The school in one of the city's poorest neighbourhoods is hoping to expand its campus by building a cafeteria, gymnasium and theatre.

The innovative school has struggled to raise money this year for its $2.8 million operating budget. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Dean and Dan do it all

Dan and Dean Caten are loving this moment in the limelight.

The twin-brother team behind the fashion label Dsquared2 are on TV and the radio, they created concert costumes for Madonna and Britney Spears, and they'll be outfitting the headlining performers at the opening and closing ceremonies at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Earlier this year, they received a star on Canada's Walk of Fame — the only fashion designers to be honoured alongside the likes of Michael J. Fox and Wayne Gretzky.

They have a collection of branded MAC cosmetics as well as eyewear and fragrance deals. But any time it seems success might go to their heads, they remember their modest Canadian roots and have a good chuckle.

Actually, they do more than chuckle, they crack each other up, communicating in shorthand that takes other people in the room a little while to understand.

"We are twins in every sense of the word," says Dan, who describes himself as the more approachable of the two — although he's also the one who'll crack the whip at work. Dean claims he's "taller and thinner," sucking in his cheeks and striking a model-worthy pose.

Hysterics ensue.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/LUCA BRUNO

Dan, left, and Dan Caten are fashion designers, and now TV hosts.

They've been this close since the day they were born in 1964 in Willowdale, a neighbourhood in north Toronto, and have wanted to work in fashion almost as long, Dean says.

Family life was as ordinary as it could be in a household with nine kids, yet he and Dan always had an eye on a bigger picture that his family couldn't see.

Still, they're proud of their Canadian roots: Maple leaves are incorporated into several designs each season.

Music is a key source of inspiration, the Catens say, and they put together the playlist for their runway shows as they're sketching styles. Their famous soundtracks led to XM Radio's Dean and Dan On Air: Style in Stereo and now they host Bravo's new Launch My Line, which gives artistic professionals a chance to break into the fashion biz.

The Catens' personalities largely serve as the glue for the TV show.

"Not only are they supercredible, hot and talented designers, the idea of having identical twin brother designers as fashion hosts is as unique as they are," says Andy Cohen, senior vice-president of original programming and development at Bravo.

"Plus they're fun, fun, fun!" **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

FRIDAY 12/18/09

VA	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	251	308	3 CBC	Wheel	Jeopardy! (N)	Home Alone ★★★ (1990, Comedy) Macaulay Culkin. (CC)				CBC News: The National (N)		The Hour
	250	321	9 CTV	etalk (CC)	Access H.	Playing for Keeps (2009) Jennifer Finnigan. (CC)				Michael Bublé		CTV News
	252	336	11 GTV	Entertainment	ET Canada	Dollhouse Echo is sent into her worst nightmare. (N) (CC)				NUMB3RS "First Law" (CC)		News
	256	389	12 VI	Island Week	TMZ (N)	The Carol Project (CC)		At the Concert Hall (CC)		Stargate Atlantis		A News (N)
	253	359	13 CITY	The Office	The Office	Supernanny (N) (CC)		Mantracker "Julio and Joe"		The Jay Leno Show (N)		The CityNews
	-	-	14 CW	The Office	The Office	The Vampire Diaries (CC)		The Vampire Diaries (CC)		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Frasier (CC)
	289	381	15 CBS	Entertainment	The Insider	Frosty	Frosty	(:01) Medium (CC)		(:01) NUMB3RS "First Law"		KIRO 7 News
	287	379	16 NBC	Evening Mag.	Inside Edition	Law & Order "Zero" (CC)		Dateline NBC (N) (CC)		The Jay Leno Show (N)		KING 5 News
	288	380	21 ABC	Wheel	Jeopardy! (N)	Supernanny (N) (CC)		20/20 (CC)		20/20 (CC)		News
	290	382	23 FOX	Two Men	Two Men	Dollhouse Echo is sent into her worst nightmare. (N) (CC)				News	Most Wanted	Family Guy
news	502	390	23 NW	Snowdon and Margaret		CBC News: The National (N)		CBC News: The National (N)		Snowdon and Margaret		National
	500	500	33 CNN	Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)				Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)		Cooper 360
sports	407	419	22 RSP	Skiing: Giant Slalom		Hockey	Canucks TV	The Ultimate Fighter		Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Sportsnet
	400	400	30 TSN	NHL Hockey Washington Capitals at Vancouver Canucks. (Live) (CC)					SportsCentre	NFL Presents	Strength	SportsCentre
family	552	543	25 YTV	Unaccompanied Minors ★★ (2006) Dyllan Christopher.				Funniest Home Videos		That's-Weird	Sorry	Adrenaline
	555	545	50 TEL	Batman	Wolverine	Justice	Justice	Futurama	King of Hill	Renaissance ★★ (2006, Action) Premiere.		
	268	354	5 KNO	Child's Christmas in Wales		Poirot "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" (N) (CC)				Koyaanisqatsi ★★★ (1983) Premiere. (CC)		
variety	575	583	20 CMT	Paul Brandt's Christmas		All Through the Night		The Sons of Mistletoe (2001, Drama) Roma Downey.				Faith Hill, Joy
	615	520	61 A&E	Criminal Minds (CC)		CSI: Miami (CC)		(:01) Criminal Minds (CC)		(:01) Criminal Minds (CC)		Criminal
	521	560	24 TLC	Four Weddings (N) (CC)		Say Yes	Say Yes	Four Weddings (CC)		Say Yes to the Dress		Dress
	616	522	39 SHO	The Outer Limits (CC)		Howie Do It	Howie Do It	Kenny vs.	Kenny	Law & Order: UK "Buried"		Cra$h & Burn
	294	650	57 TBS	(6:45) Madagascar ★★★ (2005, Comedy)			Very Funny	The Holiday ★★ (2006) Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet, Jude Law. (CC)				
	603	561	69 FN	Diners	Diners	Ramsay's Kitchen		Unwrapped	Unwrapped	Bobby Flay	Bobby Flay	Diners
	-	-	95 AMC	All I Want for Christmas ★★ (1991) Ethan Randall. (CC)				King Kong ★★ (1976, Fantasy) Jeff Bridges, Jessica Lange. (CC)				
	320	621	30 CEN	(6:30) The Boy Next Door		The Haunting of Molly Hartley ★ (2008)			Lakeview Terrace ★★ (2008) Samuel L. Jackson. (CC)			
	581	566	101 MTV	Teen Mom (CC)		1 girl 5 gays	Cribs (CC)	After Show	Over Bolts	Teen Mom (CC)		Cribs (CC)

SATURDAY 12/19/09

VA	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	251	308	3 CBC	NHL Hockey Washington Capitals at Edmonton Oilers. (Live) (CC)					HNIC: After Hours		News	HNIC Replay
	250	321	9 CTV	Christmas- White House		Muppets Christmas: Letters		Chasing Christmas (2005, Drama) Tom Arnold. (CC) (DVS)				CTV News
	252	336	11 GTV	Santa Claus Parade (N)		Project Runway Canada		Blind Trust (2007) Jessica Capshaw, Chad Willett. (CC)				News Final
	256	389	12 VI	Kool Countdown (CC)		Anne of Green Gables ★★★ (1985) Megan Follows.				Stargate Atlantis		Bravo!FACT
	253	359	13 CITY	Amazing	Role	Glenn Martin	Out There	White Noise ★ (2005) Michael Keaton. (CC) (DVS)				Amazing
	-	-	14 CW	The Office	The Office	Smash Cuts	Smash Cuts	The Hills	The Hills	CSI: NY "Consequences"		CSI: Miami
	289	381	15 CBS	Entertainment Tonight (N)		Elf ★★★ (2003, Comedy) Will Ferrell, James Caan. (CC)				(:01) 48 Hours Mystery (N)		KIRO 7 News
	287	379	16 NBC	Backroads	Inside Edition	Muppets Christmas: Letters		WWE Tribute to the Troops		Law & Order: SVU		KING 5 News
	288	380	21 ABC	Fortune	Jeopardy!	The Santa Clause 2 ★★ (2002, Comedy) Tim Allen. (CC)				Castle "Inventing the Girl"		News
	290	382	23 FOX	Two Men	Two Men	Cops (CC)	Cops (CC)	America's Most Wanted		News	Most Wanted	Wanda Sykes
news	502	390	23 NW	Inside the Saudi Kingdom		National	Issue	National	Mansbridge	Inside the Saudi Kingdom		National
	500	500	33 CNN	Newsroom		Campbell Brown		Larry King Live		Newsroom		Newsroom
sports	407	419	22 RSP	NFL Football: Cowboys at Saints			Sportsnet	Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Poker
	400	400	30 TSN	(6:30) SportsCentre (CC)		Boxing Manny Pacquiao vs. Miguel Cotto.			30 for 30 (CC)		Strength	SportsCentre
family	552	543	25 YTV	Flintstones Fred plays Santa.		He-Man, She-Ra Christmas		Funniest Home Videos		Survive This	Ghost	Adrenaline
	555	545	50 TEL	The Legend of Frosty the Snowman Ice skate. (CC)				Futurama	King of Hill	Chicken	Venture Bros.	Moral Orel
	268	354	5 KNO	National Geographic		Heartbeat "Ups and Downs"		Midsomer Murders Probing the murder of an undertaker.				Christmas
variety	575	583	20 CMT	12 Days of Christmas Eve (2004) Steven Weber, Molly Shannon. Premiere.				12 Days of Christmas Eve (2004, Drama) Steven Weber.				
	615	520	61 A&E	Criminal Minds (CC)		CSI: Miami (CC)		(:01) Criminal Minds (CC)		(:01) Criminal Minds (CC)		Criminal
	521	560	24 TLC	Ghost Intervention (N) (CC)		Police Women of Broward		Ghost Intervention (CC)		Ghost Intervention (N) (CC)		Gotta Hurt
	616	522	39 SHO	The Guard "Just Say No"		Christmas Town (2008) Nicole de Boer, Garry Chalk. (CC)				Superbad ★★★ (2007) Jonah Hill. (CC)		
	294	650	57 TBS	(6:00) Blades of Glory (2007)		Funniest Commercials: 2009		Rush Hour 2 ★★ (2001) Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker.				Shanghai
	603	561	69 FN	Top Chef: Las Vegas (CC)		The F Word (CC)		Dear Food Network (CC)		Gordon Ramsay: Cook		Chef: Vegas
	-	-	95 AMC	(5:00) Unforgiven ★★★★		Unforgiven ★★★★ (1992, Western) Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman. (CC)						Wyatt Earp
	320	621	30 CEN	(6:15) The Longshots ★★		Two Lovers ★★★ (2008) Joaquin Phoenix. Premiere. (CC)				The Last Winter ★★★ (2006) (CC)		
	581	566	101 MTV	After Show	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	1 girl 5 gays	Peak Season	After	MTV Live	Sex News	1 girl 5 gays

SUNDAY 12/20/09

VA	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	251	308	3 CBC	Pooh	The Grinch	National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation ★★ (1989) (CC)				CBC News: The National (N)		News
	250	321	9 CTV	Shrek the Third ★★ (2007) Voices of Mike Myers. (CC)				The Bourne Supremacy ★★★ (2004) Matt Damon. (CC)				CTV News
	252	336	11 GTV	Simpsons	Family Guy	Survivor: Samoa (Season Finale) (N) (CC)				Survivor: Samoa (CC)		News Final
	256	389	12 VI	Rita MacNeil-Personal Note		Anne of Green Gables ★★★ (1985) Megan Follows.				Stargate Atlantis "Trinity"		New Canoe
	253	359	13 CITY	Survivorman (CC) (DVS)		Royal Pains (CC)		Departures "Canada"		Conviction Kitchen		Amazing
	-	-	14 CW	Boston Legal (CC)		CSI: Miami "Triple Threat"		CSI: NY "Sweet 16" (CC)		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Frasier (CC)
	289	381	15 CBS	60 Minutes (N) (CC)		Survivor: Samoa (Season Finale) (N) (CC)				Survivor: Samoa (CC)		KIRO 7 News
	287	379	16 NBC	NFL Football: Vikings at Panthers			The Jim Mora	Dateline NBC (CC)		Law & Order: SVU		KING 5 News
	288	380	21 ABC	Funniest Home Videos		The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause ★ (2006) (CC)				Desperate Housewives		News
	290	382	23 FOX	Brothers	'Til Death	Simpsons	Cleveland Sh	Family Guy	Amer Dad	News	Sports	House (CC)
news	502	390	23 NW	March of the Penguins ★★★ (2005, Documentary)				CBC News: The National (N)		March of the Penguins ★★★ (2005)		
	500	500	33 CNN	Newsroom		State of the Union		Larry King Live		State of the Union		Union
sports	407	419	22 RSP	NHL Hockey St. Louis Blues at Vancouver Canucks. (Subject to Blackout)					Sportsnet	Sportsnet Connected		Sportsnet
	400	400	30 TSN	NFL Football: Vikings at Panthers			SportsCentre (Live) (CC)		Motoring	Auto Racing	SnowTrax	SportsCentre
family	552	543	25 YTV	Christmas With the Kranks		SpongeBob	Family Biz	Smallville "Requiem" (CC)		Survive This	Ghost	Adrenaline
	555	545	50 TEL	Little Spirit	6TEEN "Snow Job"		6TEEN	Futurama	King of Hill	Bromwell	Rick & Steve	John
	268	354	5 KNO	National Geographic		Oliver Twist (2007, Drama) Timothy Spall, William Miller, Adam Arnold. Premiere. (CC)						Christmas
variety	575	583	20 CMT	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons	Wilsons
	615	520	61 A&E	Jacksons: A Family Dynasty		Jacksons: A Family Dynasty		(:01) Criminal Minds (CC)		(:01) Criminal Minds (CC)		Jacksons
	521	560	24 TLC	Addicted to Psychics (N)		I'm Pregnant	I'm Pregnant	Pregnant and in Peril (CC)		Addicted to Psychics (CC)		Mystery ER
	616	522	39 SHO	Cra$h & Burn (CC)		Christmas Caper (2007) Shannen Doherty. (CC)				Smokin' Aces ★★ (2007) Ben Affleck. (CC)		
	294	650	57 TBS	Wedding	The School of Rock ★★★ (2003) Jack Black, Joan Cusack. (CC)					Freaky Friday ★★★ (2003) Lindsay Lohan		
	603	561	69 FN	In Search of Perfection		Unwrapped Holiday favorites.		Unwrapped Holiday treats.		Iron Chef America (CC)		Challenge
	-	-	95 AMC	Prancer ★★ (1989) Sam Elliott, Rebecca Harrell. (CC)				A Christmas Carol ★★ (1984) George C. Scott, Angela Pleasence. (CC)				
	320	621	30 CEN	(5:50) The Great Debaters		Role Models ★★★ (2008) Paul Rudd			(:45) Illegal Tender ★★ (2007) Rick Gonzalez. (CC)			
	581	566	101 MTV	Real World-Road Rules		1 girl 5 gays	Over Bolts	Peak Season	Peak Season	Real World-Road Rules		1 girl 5 gays

Sherlock Holmes memorabilia stockpiled in Minnesota

COLLECTION Deep in an underground cavern at the University of Minnesota lies the world's largest collection of Holmes memorabilia — a cache sure to expand with material from the new Sherlock Holmes movie starring Robert Downey Jr..

"People think the Holmes collection ought to be in London. So it's 'Why Minnesota?'"
Curator Tim Johnson

To many, it's a mystery how this trove of tens of thousands of books, toys, games, posters and recordings — from copies of the Holmes stories owned by the last empress of Russia to an original manuscript page of The Hound of the Baskervilles — ended up at a Midwestern university, half a world away from the foggy London streets of Holmes.

The answer is elementary, according to Tim Johnson, curator of special collections and rare books at the University of Minnesota Libraries: A "happy series of accidents" involving a retired university librarian, a Nobel Prize laureate and a Holmes fan who took a "vacuum cleaner" approach to collecting.

"People think the Holmes collection ought to be in London. So it's 'Why Minnesota?' And it's really just this series of happy events that occurred over time," Johnson says.

Sherlock Holmes, already out in Britain, is being released Christmas Day in the U.S. Directed by Guy Ritchie, the film stars Downey as a man-of-action Holmes unravelling a nefarious plot by Lord Blackwood in Victorian England.

The Holmes collection in Minnesota has between 15,000 and 16,000 volumes, and other pieces bring the archive to 60,000 or more, Johnson said. They are kept in a cavern, fitted out for storage, about 85 feet below ground at the Elmer L. Andersen Library, where temperatures and humidity are controlled.

On metal shelves sit memorabilia including magnifying glasses, an ice cream carton with a cartoon cow wearing Holmes' iconic deerstalker cap, a Muppet character from Sesame Street.

Other major Holmes or Doyle archives are at Harvard University, the Toronto Public Library and Portsmouth, England.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

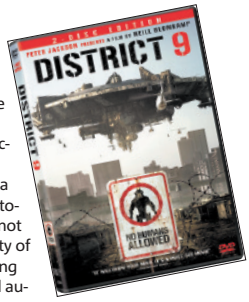
Seinfeld to replace O'Brien?
With Conan O'Brien's disappointing transition into the Tonight Show chair, popeater.com is reporting that NBC has its eyes on replacing him with none other than comedian, Jerry Seinfeld. **POPEATER.COM**

Going Out

Metro's 7th Heaven: Metro taps what's hot right now

1 Avatar
FILM Actually, Did You Hear About The Morgans? was our first choice ... just kidding. No movie opening this week can stand up to the gazillion-dollar behemoth that is Avatar. Ontario-born James Cameron dishes out the ultimate Hollywood spectacle in as many cinematic forms as you can imagine — 2-D, 3-D and IMAX.. So, the big box-office question is: Will it sink Titanic?

2 District 9
DVD James Cameron, take note: It only takes $30 million to make arguably one of the best sci-fi films ever. Set in his native South Africa, director Neill Blomkamp targets everything from xenophobia to class conflict in this start-to-finish entertainer. And it's not all politics — there are plenty of things blowing up and oozing out to keep Michael Bay-fed audiences happy as well.



3 Kid Sings Jason Mraz
VIDEO A five-year-old proves that not knowing the lyrics to a song and being out of tune are no impediments to stardom. Armed with a ukulele, the Japanese boy sings the ubiquitous I'm Yours on this viral video, which has garnered close to five million hits. Take that, cute kittens.

4 Cleaving: Julie Powell
BOOK Subtitled A Story of Marriage, Meat and Obsession, this memoir serves up tales from the slaughterhouse and garnishes them with the dirty entrails of the writer's own marriage gone bad. It's a particularly bloody affair — replete with both adultery and offal. .

5 Decade/Year-End Lists
NEWS Nickelback best of band of the decade (Billboard)? Animal Collective's My Girls best song of the year (Pitchfork)? When it comes to media, 'tis the season of those authoritative, we-know-it-all picks. And, thanks to the end of the first 10 years of the millennium, we get two lists of each instead of one.

6 Nine: OST
ALBUM Chicago director Rob Marshall revives the 1982 award-winning musical, which was based on Frederico Fellini's arthouse hit 81/2. Everyone from Black Eyed Peas' Fergie to Penelope Cruz flex their vocal chords for this adaptation.

7 Jason Reitman
DIRECTOR This Canadian-born filmmaker is the new It Boy of Hollywood. He burst upon the scene with Thank You for Not Smoking and went on to score a hit with Juno. Now with Up In The Air, he seems poised to soar during awards season.

Mix of Six

Ugly Christmas Sweater Party
When: Friday, 8 p.m.
Where: Commodore Ballroom, 868 Granville St.
A mandatory festive dress code is in effect for the 8th annual Ugly Christmas Sweater Party at the Commodore Ballroom. Proceeds go to the Union Gospel Mission. Tix: $20. Info: 604-739-4550.

Christmas at Canada Place
When: Daily, 6-8 a.m., 5-11 p.m.
Where: Canada Place
Daily light show benefits the Stratchcona Community Centre's Food Security for Children program. christmas.canadaplace.ca.

Bright Nights
When: Ongoing
Where: Stanley Park Children's Farmyard
The 12th annual Bright Nights raises money for the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund. Info: vancouver.ca/parks/events/brightnights.

Irving Berlin's White Christmas: The Musical
When: To Dec. 27
Where: Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage
Beloved holiday musical about love and friendship based on the classic Christmas film, directed by Bill Millerd.
Info: artsclub.com.

Canyon Lights
When: Ongoing
Where: Capilano Suspension Bridge
Around 250,000 lights will adorn the bridge and rainforest at the park. Tix: $35 for a family of four. Info: capbridge.com.

Winter Harp
When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.
Where: St. Andrew's Wesley Church
World-class ensemble Winter Harp performs an evening of carols, songs and stories. Info: winterharp.com.

Arcade Fire burning bright at end of decade

As far as introductions go, it's tough to top the incandescent initiation received by Arcade Fire.

It was Sept. 12, 2004, when the influential, stubbornly snobby music webzine Pitchfork published a gushing review of Funeral, the 10-song debut record from the Montreal band.

"It's taken perhaps too long for us to reach this point where an album is at last capable of completely and successfully restoring the tainted phrase 'emotional' to its true origin," read the review.

Just like that, word spread like, um, wildfire.

Arcade Fire guitarists Richard Parry, left, Will Bulter, second left, and singer Win Butler, third left.

The budding blogosphere was quick to hoist the indie-rockers onto its collective shoulders, and soon the band was rising to lofty heights.

But unlike many of the other similarly feted groups of the past 10 years, Arcade Fire wasn't discarded as quickly. In a decade where music was disposable, Funeral did the near-impossible: it refused to die.

Over the past few weeks, Funeral has been featured in the top 10 of end-of-decade album lists compiled by Rolling Stone, NME, Entertainment Weekly, the Guardian, Pitchfork, the Irish Times, the Independent and the Onion. Strains of the album's influence can be found in everything from past blogger favourites such as Clap Your Hands Say Yeah to the orchestral-influenced arena-rock amplitude of Coldplay.

And Montreal, which deservedly drew as much attention as any rock town since Seattle in the wake of Funeral, continues to rapidly output noteworthy bands.

Looking back on the past 10 years, it's clear that only a select list of artists — Canadian or otherwise — can compete with what Arcade Fire accomplished.

"Record of the decade? I'd have to go with that," Hey Rosetta frontman Tim Baker said of Funeral during a recent a telephone interview.

"They really just changed the face of pop music."

The manner in which they did it, too, remains something of a wonder.

After years of shifting lineups and juggling band members, Arcade Fire began making noise around Montreal in 2003 after self-releasing an EP. Initially, it was their raucous, almost confrontational live show that inspired buzz.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Gordie Howe Night
Celebrate a hockey legend with the Giants and join us for Gordie Howe Night. The first 5000 fans will receive a commemorative photo and of those, 100 lucky random fans will win an **autographed** copy of his new book and get to **meet Mr. Hockey®** during the game!
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Wayne Gretzky

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Sounds of the holidays

Enjoy an evening of Christmas carols and songs with the Vancouver Chamber Choir on Dec. 20 at 3 p.m. Takes place at Ryerson United Church. For tickets ($10-$26), call 604-280-3311 or go to ticketmaster.ca. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Holiday Fun Guide

Shopping spree

Pick up some handmade crafts by local Japanese-Canadian artists until Dec. 19 at the Shiwasu Handmade Gifts Show and Sale. Takes place at the National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For more, go to jcnm.ca. METRO NEWS SERVICES

SPECIAL FEATURES EDITOR: STEPHANIE.BOMBA@METRONEWS.CA

The 12 wines of Christmas

PETER ROCKWELL
for Metro Canada

Who said choosing a wine to go with turkey, stuffing, gravy, vegetables, cranberry sauce and every other edible family tradition has to be hard?

White wines

1 Domaine Chandon Brut Classic, $23.99-$30.99*

Forget New Year's (for now); sparkling wines are super food-friendly and this American wine — made with a champagne sensibility — will add excitement to any holiday meal.

2 Caymus Vineyards 2007 Conundrum, $24.95-$29.99

Sauvignon blanc is only one piece of this tasty multi-grape puzzle that twists refreshing tropical flavours around a lasting core of fresh white fruit.

3 Wolf Blass 2008 Yellow Label Riesling, $13.99-$16.99

'Tis the season for German riesling, but New Worlders like this Aussie tend to be a tad drier, making them even more appealing with a wide variety of food flavours.

4 J. Lohr 2007 Riverston Chardonnay, $19.05-$23.79

Heavily oaked chards are passé, so J. Lohr has softened its Riverstone persona by toning down the wood and playing up the citrus, which works better with turkey anyway.

5 Oyster Bay 2008 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, $17.99-$21.99

Thick, rich and full-figured, Oyster Bay is a textured wonder from New Zealand that cozies up to white (and most red) meats.

6 Mezzacorona 2008 Pinot Grigio, $12.95-$14.99

Crisp and crowd-pleasing; pinot grigio is an all-purpose grape with Mezzacorona's interpretation a great mate for sweet, earthy and vegetal flavours.

Red wines

7 Boekenhoutskloof 2008 The Wolftrap, $13.95-$14.99

The Wolftrap's a funky South African blend that's got enough muscle to drumstick wrestle turkey and plenty of fruit to fend off forward side dishes.

8 Kim Crawford 2008 Marlborough Noir, $19.95-$24.99

Pinot is a historic match for both roast poultry and ham with Mr. Crawford's big, bright version a vintage to vintage winner thanks to layers of strawberry fruit.

9 Ravenswood 2007 Vintners Blend Zinfandel, $17.95-$19.99

Zinfandel's typical mix of creamy chocolate and ripe berry fruit complexity is a fine companion for turkey — especially when the gravy boat drops anchor.

10 Ruffino 2006 Il Ducale Toscana, $19.95-$22.99

Cherry fruit, soft spice and juicy, flowing flavours all marry to make sangiovese-based wines like the Il Ducale a classic pick with the gobbler and eclectic holiday choices like lamb, veal and pizza.

11 Concho y Toro 2008 Casillero del Diablo Shiraz, $12.95-$13.99

Chile knows how to squeeze some major spice and concentrated red fruit out of shiraz, and this Diablo makes nice with both turkey and anything beefy.

12 Georges Duboeuf 2008 Beaujolais-Villages, $12.95-$17.99

Though a red Burgundy or merlot-based Saint-Émilion from Bordeaux both love turkey, when it comes to a French companion I'm all about Beaujolais. Fresh and super fruity (especially when lightly chilled) they pair with everything and everyone.

* Prices reflect the range across the country.

Peter Rockwell is Metro's wine columnist. Check out his Liquid Assets column on Tuesdays or online at metronews.ca/liquidassets.

Real vs. artificial tree a personal choice

RAFAEL BRUSILOW
for Metro Canada

Real or artificial, how will you celebrate the Christmas tree tradition this holiday season?

The choice is often a personal one and both options have their pluses and minuses.

On one side, an artificial tree can be reused season after season, creates no mess and requires no upkeep or care, but it usually costs much more and requires a large amount of storage space to hide it for the rest of the year.

On the other hand, a real tree offers the look, feel and smell of a real tree usually for a cheaper price, as well as the satisfaction of having a real symbol of Christmas in your living room. Of course, you'll have to spend some time to find, cut down and transport your real tree, and you'll also have to take good care of it and find a way to dispose of it later — but at least it won't take up any space in your house once the holiday season is over.

"For some people it's a very strong tradition to have a real tree, and you can't get an artificial tree with a scent," said Brian Horton, owner of Horton Tree Farms in Stouffville, Ont.

If you do decide to go for a real tree, Horton offers a few tips on finding and taking care of your real Christmas tree.

The first thing for eco-conscious revellers to know about real trees is that you're not harming the environment by deciding on a real tree. The majority of tree farms are established on the cheapest, most marginal land not suitable for growing other crops, and every cut tree is always replaced with a fresh sapling that eventually grows into another Christmas-ready tree.

"It is a renewable crop and the trees stabilize the soil to prevent erosion. They're slowly helping to reclaim the land," he said.

But before you head out to a tree farm pick up your real tree, make sure to take a few measurements.

"Trees always seem to look smaller in the field than they do in your house, so measure your space and take along a tape measure," Horton said.

Look for a good, consistent colour throughout the tree and give the needles a tug to see if the tree is healthy.

"You can pull on the green needles and they should not come off, and if you bend the needles, they shouldn't break," he said.

Don't worry too much if the tree has a few brown needles — shedding needles is a natural thing.

Before placing your tree in its stand, be sure to make a fresh cut to help it absorb water. Feel free to score the bark just above the cut to help with absorption. Make sure to keep your tree watered.

"The key is to never let it run out of water. I would not buy a stand that holds any less than two litres of water," Horton said.

If possible, keep your tree out of direct sunlight and away from any heat sources to avoid having the tree dry out.

Once the season is over, look for tree-recycling programs in your area to dispose of your tree responsibly, or chop it into firewood for the winter.

Trees always seem smaller in the field than they do in your house, so take measurements before heading out, experts say.

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America's Next Top Model contestants to get some high-fashion advice
America's Next Top Model is in vogue. The model competition series has named André Leon Talley, Vogue magazine's editor-at-large, as its new fourth judge, TVGuide.com has confirmed. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Celebrity Buzz

Frances Bean slaps Love with restraining order

NO SNARK, JUST SAD Courtney Love's custody debacle seems to only be getting worse, as a Los Angeles judge has now issued a restraining order keeping her from seeing her daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, according to Page Six.

The order was reportedly acquired after Love took to her Facebook account to savage her daughter with a series of expletive-laden rants after losing custody of the 17-year-old.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Hermione tops decade's highest-paid actress list

BOX OFFICE MAGICIAN Emma Watson is the highest paid actress of the past decade, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The Harry Potter actress — who plays Hermione Granger in the wizard film series, which started in 2001 — has been awarded the title by the Guinness Book of World Records.

The 19-year-old star's starring role in the six films, as well as her voice part in animated movie The Tale Of Despereaux, helped take $5.4 billion US worldwide, putting the takings ahead of some of Hollywood's big players including Julia Roberts, Halle Berry and Cameron Diaz.

She also boasts the highest average box office receipts per movie, with each of her films making an average of $897,100,000.

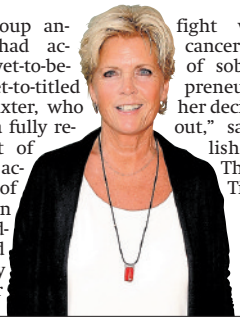
METRO WORLD NEWS

Baxter to pen memoirs

COMING OUT TO A BOOKSTORE NEAR YOU Having come out in the pages of People earlier this month as a real-life lesbian mother, Meredith Baxter — who played the popular TV mom Elyse Keaton on the '80s sitcom Family Ties — will now put her entire story to paper, people.com reports.

This week, the Broadway Books imprint of Crown Publishing Group announced it had acquired a yet-to-be-written, yet-to-titled memoir by Baxter, who "will present a fully realized portrait of her life as an actress, mother of five children and grandmother, and will candidly discuss her fight with breast cancer, her 19 years of sobriety, entrepreneurship and her decision to come out," says the publisher, reports The New York Times.

METRO WORLD NEWS



Tiger romance rumours a "lie," says Simpson

BUT PLEASE KEEP PUBLISHING STORIES ABOUT ME ANYWAY Jessica Simpson was quick to set the record straight about rumors that she once flirted with Tiger Woods, taking to her Twitter account to refute a Star magazine cover story.

"Can't believe that I'm on the cover of star magazine with Tiger Woods, what a joke," Simpson posted on her account. "The Shocking Inside Story' is (insert drumroll) a lie!"

METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity tweets

Josh Groban is in the holiday spirit, Tyra Banks doesn't mean to be so difficult, Paris Hilton is staying in, and Kevin Spacey wants to hang out.

• @joshgroban I always think its cute when music press gets downright flabbergasted that christmas music is topping the charts in december.

• @tyrabanks i'm crazy. talking 'bout my tummy not feeling good from creamy ice cream then complaining when they don't give u enuf!

• @ParisHilton Just ordered Italian food to be delivered. Yum! So hungry!

• @KevinSpacey I am standing on stage at the Old Vic with Eddie Izzard who is just about to do his show. Come down for a drink.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Shia's sweet un-Hollywood date

ECO-LOVE Shia LeBeouf has been showing British girlfriend Carey Mulligan the sights of his hometown — by bus. The Transformers star was spotted making out with his Wall Street 2 co-star at a busstop near his Sherman Oaks, Calif., home before taking her out for lunch, shopping and a movie at a nearby mall, according to People magazine. "They are a very sweet couple," a source says. "They browsed several books and would not let go of each other's hands."

METRO WORLD NEWS

Beckham's karaoke nightmares

JUST FAKE AN INJURY, BECKS David Beckham says it isn't easy sitting down to dinner with Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes, usmagazine.com reports.

"We were at dinner once with Tom and Katie ... and we sat there and everyone was like, 'OK, let's play a music game, let's start a singing game!'" Beckham, 34, recalled on George Lopez's TBS late night show, Lopez Tonight, on Wednesday

Singing in public, he said, "Is my worst nightmare!" Beckham said he noticed one of his friends was dining at another table nearby.

"So I was texting my friend, 'Oh, please, invite me to your table!'" said Beckham. "I kind of get uncomfortable with that."

Kidding aside, Cruise, 47, and Holmes, 30, "are amazing parents and really good people," Beckham said. "You say there's good looking people, and you look at Tom, and he's one of the most handsome men I've ever met."

METRO WORLD NEWS

Hugh Grant doesn't think he's 'special'

IF ONLY MORE ACTORS HAD HALF AS MUCH SELF-AWARENESS Hugh Grant doesn't think he's all that special. "I'm very picky but also very limited as an actor," Grant tells USA Today. "I've always said that if you give me an Ibsen script, I can get away with it. But there are a lot of people who can do it better."

METRO WORLD NEWS

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Saturday Partly sunny 40% 5° / 2°
Sunday Rain 90% 7° / 5°
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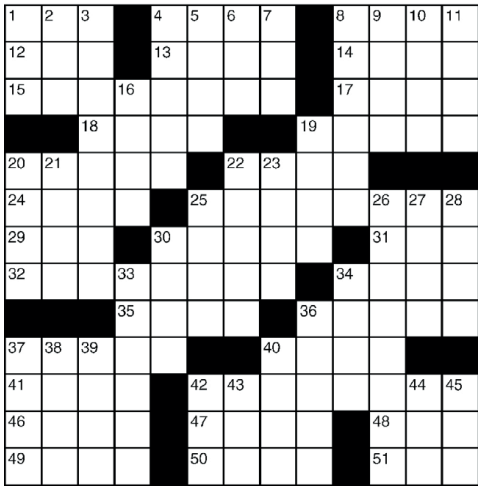
Take Five

For more delicious Metro recipes, visit: metronews.ca/food



Sudoku

For more/less challenging Sudoku puzzles, visit metronews.ca

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

					1		7	
6	1				5	2		
	9		2			4		
	2			4	3		5	
8								6
	7		6	5			2	
		7			9		8	
		2	1				9	3
	4		8					

ACROSS

1 Tummy muscles
4 Talon
8 European capital
12 Rotation duration
13 Swearword
14 Satanic
15 Roget's list?
17 Edges
18 Hair salon supply
19 High nest
20 Ranch statistic
22 Isinglass
24 Lummox
25 Do the tourist thing
29 Felon's flight
30 Hiawatha's transport
31 Singer Sumac
32 Willing participant?
34 Heal, as a fracture
35 Addict
36 Theater array
37 Leonine comments
40 Dance lesson
41 Tel —
42 It makes a long story short
46 Put together
47 Inheritor
48 Wapiti
49 Coaster
50 Catch sight of
51 Crafty

DOWN

1 Billboards
2 Chesapeake or Hudson
3 Group of symptoms
4 Ice-cream parlor stack
5 Deposits
6 $ dispenser
7 "How come?"
8 Prepare leftovers
9 Finished
10 "La Boheme" role
11 Differently
16 — and terminer
19 Rue the run
20 Competent
21 Wheedle
22 Not that important
23 "Young Frankenstein" role
25 Fill till full
26 Spots between neurons
27 Send forth
28 Chows down on
30 Talk a blue streak?
33 Not straight
34 Retain
36 Tale
37 St. Louis team
38 Elliptical
39 Staffer
40 Wield scissors
42 That girl
43 "Absolutely"
44 Under the weather
45 Firmament

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

3	5	9	6	4	7	8	2	1
2	1	7	8	3	5	4	9	6
6	8	4	9	1	2	7	3	5
1	4	3	5	7	9	6	8	2
7	9	8	2	6	3	5	1	4
5	6	2	4	8	1	3	7	9
4	3	1	7	2	6	9	5	8
8	7	5	1	9	4	2	6	3
9	2	6	3	5	8	1	4	7

On the web

For more games and 60 additional daily cartoon strips, visit metronews.ca

Metro Recipe of the Day

Chicken, Thyme and Mushroom Soup

INGREDIENTS:

2 tbsp (25 mL) olive oil
7 oz (200 g) skinless chicken breast fillets, diced
1 red onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, chopped
2 celery sticks, chopped
1/2 lb (250 g) mushrooms, chopped
1 tbsp (15 mL) chopped fresh thyme
1 tbsp (15 mL) dry sherry
1 tbsp (15 mL) Worcestershire sauce
3 cups (750 mL) chicken stock
4 tbsp (60 mL) sour cream

METHOD:

1. Heat oil in large pot and fry chicken 5 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pot and set aside. Add onion, garlic and celery to pot and cook 5 minutes.
2. Add chopped mushrooms, thyme, sherry and Worcestershire sauce. Season lightly and cook vegetables 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Tip mixture into food processor and add half of stock. Process until smooth, then return to pot and add remaining stock. Return chicken to pot and heat until boiling. Simmer 3 minutes. Stir in 2 tbsp (25 mL) sour cream and return to boil.
4. Ladle into bowls and swirl small spoonful of remaining sour cream on to each.

SERVES 4

rd.ca

For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton sallybrompton.com

For Sally's expanded daily and weekend horoscopes, visit metronews.ca

ARIES ♈
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
Duty calls today and although you might not want to knuckle down you know if you don't you will be up against the clock the whole weekend.

TAURUS ♉
APRIL 21-MAY 21
The Sun moves into one of the best areas of your chart on the 21st and it won't be long before you've forgotten all about your worries

GEMINI ♊
MAY 22-JUNE 21
You may not be in the most sociable of moods today but that's okay because the more time you spend thinking and planning the better.

CANCER ♋
JUNE 22-JULY 22
For some reason you cannot be bothered to make much of an effort at the moment but everything that needs to be done will be done for you by others

LEO ♌
JULY 23-AUG 23
Don't waste time arguing with others about trivial matters. There are far more important issues you should be focusing on now

VIRGO ♍
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Heal a rift with a partner or loved one today. Say sorry. Put the relationship before your ego.

LIBRA ♎
SEPT 23-OCT 23
Keep your opinions to yourself, especially on the home front where things could get tense if you speak your mind.

SCORPIO ♏
OCT 24-NOV 22
You may not be able to speak freely now but come the 21st you will more than make up for your current reticence.

SAGITTARIUS ♐
NOV 23-DEC 21
You know that someone needs help and you are more than willing to give it but what can you do when they keep pushing you away?

CAPRICORN ♑
DEC 22-JAN 20
If you get the chance to do a good deed for someone do it but don't make a big deal about it.

AQUARIUS ♒
JAN 21-FEB 18
According to the planets someone is as attracted to you as you are to them but they are finding it difficult to make the first move. So take the first step.

PISCES ♓
FEB 19-MARCH 20
You may be having problems with a relationship but the effects are not yet so bad that you cannot patch things up and get back to how it was before.

This day in history

1787 – New Jersey becomes the third state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.
1932 – The Chicago Bears defeat the Portsmouth Spartans 9-0 in the first ever NFL Championship Game. Because of a blizzard, the game was moved from Wrigley Field to the Chicago Stadium, the field measuring 80 yards (73 m) long.
1956 – Japan joins the United Nations.
1996 – The Oakland, California school board passes a resolution officially declaring "Ebonics" a language or dialect.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Star Trek	**MOVIE B**
Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince	**MOVIE C**
The Hangover	**MOVIE D**
X-Men Origin: Wolverine	**MOVIE E**
Angels & Demons	**MOVIE F**
District 9	**MOVIE G**

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Puerto Vallarta	from $275 + taxes & fees $280
Miami	from $459 + taxes & fees $146

Airfares

Phoenix
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+ taxes & fees $105

Calgary	one-way from $99 + taxes & fees $45
Las Vegas	from $154 + taxes & fees $102
Toronto	one-way from $179 + taxes & fees $54
San Diego	from $229 + taxes & fees $109
Halifax	one-way from $245 + taxes & fees $57
London	from $249 + taxes & fees $465
Los Angeles	from $269 + taxes & fees $146
New York	from $299 + taxes & fees $115
New Orleans	from $449 + taxes & fees $120
Beijing	from $549 + taxes & fees $361
Rio de Janeiro	from $829 + taxes & fees $186
Sydney	from $1099 + taxes & fees $395

Vacations

Anaheim Family Special
Air + 3 Nights
from **$299**◊
+ taxes & fees $103

INCLUDES accom near *Disneyland* Resort. **ADD** 3-day *Disneyland* Resort *Park Hopper* Bonus Tickets where Adults pay Kids pricing from $164.

Las Vegas Air + 3 Nights 4-Star from $299 + taxes & fees $106

Paris Air + 2 Nights from $759 + taxes & fees $398
INCLUDES first 2 nights accom with breakfast. **ADD** 3-day consecutive France Rail pass from $268.

New York Weekend
Air + 3 Nights + Transfers from $777 + taxes & fees $120
INCLUDES Manhattan accom.

Rocky Mountains
Air + 5 Nights + Lift Passes from $869 + taxes & fees $94
INCLUDES air to Calgary and 4-day tri-area lift pass for skiing at Banff, Lake Louise & Sunshine.

Hawai'i Island Combo
Air + 7 Nights from $999 + taxes & fees $107
INCLUDES all air, 4 nights accom in Honolulu & 3 nights accom in Maui.

Egypt
Air + 6 Nights + Activities from $1299 + taxes & fees $424
INCLUDES 3 nights in Cairo, 3 nights in Luxor, daily breakfast, Pyramid & Sphinx tour and half-day tour of the East Bank.

Thailand Beaches & Bangkok
Air + 7 Nights 4-Star from $1379 + taxes & fees $325
INCLUDES all air, 3 nights Bangkok and 4 nights Phuket accom with breakfast daily. **ADD** Elephant Trekking in Phuket from $59.

Australia 3 Cities
Air + 12 Nights from $1899 + taxes & fees $438
INCLUDES air to Sydney, 3 FREE inter-Australia flights, 4 nights Sydney, 4 nights Melbourne and 4 nights Surfer's Paradise accom.

Bali Air + 7 Nights 4-Star from $2099 + taxes & fees $182
INCLUDES 3-nights Alila Ubud and 4-nights Alila Manggis accom with breakfast daily, 1hr massage, airport transfers, romantic dinner, tour of Sideman Valley. **ADD** 2-night stay in Hong Kong from $99 per night.

February Escapes

Las Vegas
Air + 3 Nights + 4-Night Cruise
from **$298**
+ taxes & fees $228

INCLUDES air from Vancouver to Las Vegas, accom on the Las Vegas Strip, air to LA and cruise transfer. **CRUISE** from LA to Vancouver and visit Victoria. Limited space available, call today.

Los Cabos
7 Nights 4.5 Star All-inclusive from $895 + taxes & fees $280
INCLUDES adults-only accom.

Mazatlan
7 Nights 4-Star All-inclusive from $919 + taxes & fees $123

Dominican Republic
7-Night 4.5-Star All-inclusive from $948 + taxes & fees $312
INCLUDES junior suite accom.

Puerto Vallarta
7 Nights 4-Star All-inclusive from $998 + taxes & fees $264

Varadero
14 Nights 4-Star All-inclusive from $1865 + taxes & fees $264

WestJet Vacations

Mazatlan
Air + 7 Nights 3-Star
from **$609**
+ taxes & fees $142

Cabo San Lucas
Air + 7 Nights 4-Star All-inclusive from $999 + taxes & fees $88

Puerto Vallarta
Air + 7 Nights 4-Star All Inclusive from $999 + taxes & fees $87

Honolulu
Air + 7 Nights 4-Star from $1049 + taxes & fees $173

Maui Air + 7 Nights 3-Star from $1139 + taxes & fees $242
BONUS 7 nights for the price of 6.

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New Years, 7 Nights 4-Star
from **$1425**
+ taxes & fees $280

Jamaica New Years
7 Nights 4-Star from $1477 + taxes & fees $266

Cancun New Years
7 Nights 4.5-Star from $1645 + taxes & fees $280

Mayan Riviera Christmas
7 Nights 4-Star from $1905 + taxes & fees $280

Cruise Vacations

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from **$689**
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CRUISE roundtrip San Juan and visit St Thomas, Tortola, Antigua, St Lucia & Barbados.

Hawaiian Islands
7-Night Cruise from $670 + taxes & fees $90
CRUISE roundtrip Honolulu and visit Maui (overnight), Big Island (Hilo & Kona) and Kauai (overnight).

Mediterranean 7-Night Cruise from $784 + taxes & fees $112
CRUISE roundtrip Barcelona and visit Monte Carlo, Florence/Livorno, Rome/Civitavecchia, Naples & Palma. **BONUS** $75 onboard credit and bottle of wine per stateroom included.

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